

# THE ARGOSY.

MAY 1, 1868.

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ANNE HEREFORD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

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## CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW TENANT BY THE LODGE GATES.

THE new tenant by the lodge gates! And it was Edwin Barley! What could have brought him to Chandos? Was it to look after ME?

The conviction, that it was so, fixed itself in my mind with startling force, and I grew nearly as sick with fear as I had been when I was a little child. That he was personally unknown to the Chandos family was evident: it seemed a strange thing that he should come and plant himself down at their very gates as soon as I became an inmate in the family. Had he in some crafty manner made himself acquainted with my entrance to it the very hour it took place? Surely it must have been so. And he had lost no time in following.

When once suspicion connected with fear arises in man's mind, or in woman's, the most trifling circumstances are allowed to confirm it. Events, however unconnected with it in reality, accidental coincidences that have no rapport (I'm afraid that's a French word, but I can't help it) with it whatever, are converted by the suggestive imagination into suspicious proofs, and looked upon as links in the chain. It might have occurred to my mind—it did occur to it—to see that it was just within the range of possibility Mr. Edwin Barley's advent had nothing whatever to do with me or my presence at Chandos, that it might be wholly unconnected with it, and he ignorant of it and of who I was; but I threw this view away at once in my fear, and did not glance at it a second time. Edwin Barley had come to Chandos because I was there, and no power of reasoning could have removed this impression from me. All these years and he had never (so far as appeared) sought to put

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himself in personal connection with the family: why should he have done it now, save for my presence in it?

Thought is quick. Before Mr. Chandos returned to me from watching Edwin Barley out at the lodge gates and across the road, I had gone over it all in my mind, and arrived at my unpleasant conviction. Some dim idea of putting as great a space of ground between me and him as was practicable, caused me to rise hastily from the garden-chair and return in-doors. Mr. Chandos walked by my side, talking of various things—the leaves that were beginning to fall, the fineness of the early autumn day, the discontent of Mr. Nero in his new home at the farmer's—having apparently forgotten already the episode of the intrusion. I answered in monosyllables, scarcely knowing what, my mind full of its new troubles.

I had done no harm during my short sojourn at Mr. Edwin Barley's, in those long-past days; I had never heard of or from him since; he had never, so far as I knew, inquired after me; so why should I fear him now? I cannot answer this: I have never been able to answer it—no, not even since things, dark and mysterious then, have been made clear. The fear had taken possession of me, and probably seemed all the worse because it was vague and inexplicable.

Luncheon was on the table when we turned into the oak-parlour, and Lady Chandos ready for it. Hickens was uncorking a bottle of claret.

"Harry, Hickens says that our new tenant has arrived," observed Lady Chandos.

We were sitting down then, and Mr. Chandos did not immediately reply. Perhaps Hickens thought the news required confirmation, for he turned round from the sideboard.

"The gentleman took possession last night, sir; so Brooks tells me: himself and three or four servants. It is only a single gentleman; there's no family. Immensely rich, they say."

"Do you know who he is, Harry?" pursued Lady Chandos.

"I don't know who he is, but I have just seen himself," replied Mr. Chandos. "He came in at our gates, deeming Chandos public property. I had to warn him off by telling him it was private."

"What did he want?" asked Lady Chandos.

"Nothing, except to look about him. Had I known he was your new tenant, I might not have been in so great a hurry to eject him."

"Oh, but, Harry, it was as well to do it. Better to let him understand from the first that we cannot have strangers entering here at will. It would not suit me, you know; I like privacy."

"That is what I told him."

"I suppose you were civil?"

"Quite civil, both of us—on the surface, at any rate. I did not take to him at first sight; that is, to his looks; and I don't fancy he took to

me. There was something peculiar in the tone of his voice, and he eyed me as though he wished to take my photograph."

"He did not know you, I dare say."

"He said he supposed he was speaking to Mr. Harry Chandos. Perhaps he thought it discourteous to be warned off in that manner. Not that he looks like one to go in for much courtesy himself: there was an air of independence about him *almost* bordering upon insolence. This young lady, I fancy, was not prepossessed in his favour."

I had sat with my head bent on my plate, trying to seem unconcerned, as if the matter were no business of mine. The sudden address of Mr. Chandos turned my face crimson. Lady Chandos looked at me.

"He—he is very ugly," I stammered in my perplexity.

"Is he?" she cried, turning to her son.

"He is rather ill-favoured, mother; a short, dark man."

"What is his name?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Chandos.

"Not know his name!" repeated Lady Chandos, laughing slightly; "and yet you accepted him as tenant!"

"Oh, well, Dexter made all the arrangements. I did not interfere personally."

"I think, before I accepted a man as tenant, I should make myself acquainted with his name," spoke Lady Chandos, in a half-joking tone, evidently attaching no importance to the matter. "Do you happen to have heard it, Dickens?"

"No, my lady."

"We shall learn it soon enough," carelessly observed Mr. Chandos. "A man may not make a less desirable tenant because he happens not to have a handsome face. Tastes differ, you know, Miss Hereford. Were we all bought and sold by our looks, what a squabbling of opinions there'd be!"

The meal was nearly over, when a startling interruption occurred. Mrs. Chandos burst wildly into the room, agitated, trembling; her hands raised, her face ashy white. Mr. Chandos threw down his knife and fork, and rose in consternation.

"Oh, Lady Chandos! Oh, Harry!" came the words, almost in a shriek. "Do come! She has fallen on the carpet in a fit—or something. I think she may be dying!"

"Excited again, Ethel!" observed Lady Chandos, the perfect calmness of her tone presenting a curious contrast. "When will you learn to take trifles quietly and rationally? Who has fallen? The white kitten?"

Mrs. Chandos did not like the reproach. "There's nothing to blame me for this time," she said, with a sob of vehemence. "It is Mrs. Freeman. She is lying there on the floor, looking frightful. I am not sure but she's dead."

"Take care of her, Harry," said Lady Chandos. "I will see what it is."

"Shall I go?" he asked. "It may be better. You can stay with Ethel."

Lady Chandos only answered by waving him back, as she quitted the room. Mrs. Chandos trembled excessively, and Mr. Chandos placed her in an easy chair.

"Calm yourself, Ethel—as my mother says."

"What nonsense you talk, Harry! As if everybody could have their feelings under control as she has—as you have! Time was when I was calm and heedless enough, Heaven knows, but since—since—you know?"

"Yes, yes; be still now. I think you might acquire a little more self-control if you tried, considering that excitement does you so much harm."

"It weakens me; it lays me prostrate for three or four days. I don't know what other harm it does me."

"Is not that enough? Where is Mrs. Freeman?"

"She is in my dining-room. I will tell you what happened. We were at luncheon—that is, I was, for she sat by the window, and would not take any: she has complained of illness for three days. 'I think you might eat a bit of this fowl,' I said to her; 'it is very nice.' Well, she made no answer; so I spoke again. Still she said nothing, and I got up to look at her, wondering whether she could have dropped asleep in a minute. I went round the chair, and there she was with a face drawn in the most frightful manner you can conceive, and the next moment she had slipped from the chair to the carpet. And you and Lady Chandos blame me for not retaining my calmness."

"Will you take anything?" he inquired, pointing to the luncheon-tray; and it struck me that he wished to get the scene she had described out of her memory.

"No, thank you. The sight of Mrs. Freeman has taken my appetite away. Suppose you come and see her for yourself: I don't mind going with you."

Mrs. Chandos put her arm within his, and they departed. Hill ran up stairs; two or three of the maids followed her. Hickens looked after them in curiosity, and then came back to his luncheon-table. Not to be in the way of anybody, I went up to my room.

For some hours I saw nothing of anybody. There was bustle in the house. Lady Chandos's voice I heard now and then, and once I caught a glimpse of Mr. Chandos in the grounds. Getting tired of my confinement, I looked out, and asked a maid-servant, who was passing in the corridor, what had been the matter.

"It was a sort of fit, miss, but she's better now," was Harriet's reply. "The doctor says she must be still, and have rest for some time to come, and she is going away this evening."

"Going away! Do you speak of Mrs. Freeman?"

"Yes, miss. She is going by her own choice. She has a sister who lives about thirteen miles from this, and she wishes to go at once to her house. My lady urged her to wait, at any rate until to-morrow, but Mrs. Freeman says she would rather go, especially as she can be of no further use at present to Mrs. Chandos. They have a suspicion that she fears another attack, and thinks she had better get to her sister's without delay. So it's all settled, and Hill is to accompany her."

Harriet departed, leaving my door on the latch. I sat, reading and listening by turns, and presently there sounded two more encountering voices outside. Those of Lady Chandos and Hill, her attendant.

"My lady," said the latter, in one of those loud whispers which penetrate the ear worse than open speaking, "is it right that I should go to-night? I could not allude to it before Mrs. Chandos."

"Why should it not be right, Hill?"

"It is the full of the moon, my lady."

Lady Chandos paused before replying, possibly in reflection. "There is no help for it, Hill," she said, at last. "Mrs. Freeman is too ill to be trusted to the care of any one but you."

So Hill had to go. The carriage was brought to the lower door in the wing, unbarred and unbolted for the occasion, and Mrs. Freeman was taken down the enclosed stairs to it, by Mr. Chandos and the doctor, so that I and my curiosity saw nothing of the exit, which I looked upon as an unmerited wrong. She was placed in the carriage, and Hill and the doctor went with her.

It was getting near dinner-time. I scarcely knew whether to go down or not, or whether there would be any dinner at all, in the state of confusion the house seemed to be in, when my doubt was solved by Lady Chandos herself. Looking out at my door, she passed me, coming along the gallery from her own room.

"I think the dinner is ready, Miss Hereford."

Following her down stairs, I saw Mr. Dexter, the agent, in the open portico, having that moment, as it appeared, come to the house. Lady Chandos crossed the hall to speak to him. He put a sealed parcel, or thick letter, into her hands.

"I beg your pardon, my lady. As I was passing here, I brought up these papers for Mr. Chandos. The new tenant opposite says there's something amiss with the roof of the coach-house, and I'm going to call and look at it."

Lady Chandos glanced casually at the letter she held; and then a thought seemed to strike her.

"What is the name of the new tenant, Mr. Dexter?"

"Barley, my lady. Mr. Edwin Barley."

There was a startled pause. Lady Chandos suddenly put her hand to her heart, as if some stitch had taken it.

"Barley!" she repeated. "Edwin Barley! Do you know whether he comes from Hallam?"

"Hallam?—Hallam?" debated Mr. Dexter with himself, in consideration. "Yes, that *is* the place he comes from. I remember now. 'Edwin Barley, Esquire, of The Oaks, Hallam.' That's the address in the deed of agreement. Good-day, my lady."

She did not attempt to detain him. With the look of awful consternation on her livid face, she turned to come back. I slipped into the dining-room; and sat down in a shady nook by the piano, hoping not to have been seen. The cloth was laid, but no servants were in the room. Only Mr. Chandos, and he stood at a side-table looking into his desk, his back to the room.

"Harry! Harry!"

Turning at the tones of unmistakeable terror, Mr. Chandos came swiftly to his mother, and took her hand.

"The new tenant," she gasped—and I think it was the only time I ever saw Lady Chandos excited; she, who imparted always the idea of calmness intensified; who had reproached Mrs. Chandos with allowing emotion to sway her! "The man by our entrance-gates!"

"Yes, yes; what of him?" cried Mr. Chandos, when she stopped from pain. "My dear mother, what has alarmed you?"

"It is Edwin Barley."

"Who?" almost shouted Mr. Chandos.

"Edwin Barley. Here, at our very gates!"

Whatever the calamity the words might imply, it seemed nearly to overwhelm Mr. Chandos. He dropped his mother's hands, and stood looking at her.

"Is the agreement signed, Harry?"

"Yes."

"Then we cannot get rid of him! What can have brought him here? Here, of all places in the world! Chance, think you?"

"No. Chance it cannot have been. I told you the new tenant had an ill-favoured face. He——"

Mr. Chandos stopped: Hickens and the footman were coming in. The soup was put on the table, and we sat down to dinner. As I moved forward from my corner, quietly and unobtrusively, looking as if I had neither seen nor heard, Lady Chandos turned to me with a start, a red flush darkening her cheeks. But I don't believe she knows, to this hour, whether I had been present during the scene, or had come in with the soup and the servants.

The dinner was eaten in almost total silence. Lady and Mr. Chandos were absorbed in their own thoughts; I in mine. The chance words of the agent, "Mr. Edwin Barley, of The Oaks," had disclosed the fact that the simple-minded old man who had been so kind to me was dead, and his brother reigned in his stead, lord of all. A rich man,

indeed, Edwin Barley must be. I think the servants in waiting must have seen that something was amiss; though, perhaps, the silence did not strike upon them so ominously as it did on my own self-consciousness.

You cannot have failed to note—and I think I have said it—that there was little ceremony observed in the every-day life at Chandos. Ten minutes after dinner, tea was rung for. Lady Chandos sat while it was brought in, and the dessert taken away.

"Will you oblige me by presiding at tea this evening, Miss Hereford?"

Had Lady Chandos not preferred the request at once, I should have withdrawn to my own room, with an excuse that I did not wish for any tea. How miserably uncomfortable I felt, sitting with them, an interloper, when I knew they must want to be talking together, and were wishing me, naturally, at the other end of the earth, none but myself can tell. I poured out the tea. Lady Chandos drank one cup, and rose.

"I must go to sit with Ethel, Harry. Will you come?"

"She does not want me," was his reply. And Lady Chandos left the room.

He let his tea stand until it was quite cold, evidently forgetting it; forgetting all but his own thoughts. I sat in patient silence. Awakening later out of his reverie, he drank it down at a draught, and rang the bell for the things to be taken away. As the man left the room with them, I happened to look at Mr. Chandos, who was then standing near the mantel-piece, and caught his eyes fixed on me, something peculiar in their expression.

"Mr. Chandos," I took courage to say, "I am very sorry to be in this position—an intruder here."

"And but for one thing I should be very glad of it," was his ready answer. "It is a pleasant in-break on our monotonous life."

"And that one thing, sir?"

"Ah! I cannot tell you all my secrets," he said, with a light laugh. "Do you make yourself at home, young lady. But for your book, that I know you are longing to be reading again, I should have compunction at leaving you alone."

He quitted the room, laughing still. I reached the book he alluded to, and sat down again. But I could not read; the surprise was too new, and thought upon thought kept crowding upon me. *They* evidently had cause to fear Edwin Barley, far more than I; perhaps then, after all, he had not come here to look after me? What the matter or the mystery could be, I knew not: but unmistakeably there was something wrong between him and Chandos.

It was turned half-past ten when Lady Chandos came back again to the oak-parlour. I had got to my book then, and was buried in it.

Mr. Chandos followed her nearly immediately, and began to wish us good-night.

"You must be tired, Harry," she observed. "You have had a fatiguing day."

"I am tired," was his reply. "I shall sleep to-night without rocking. Good-night, mother; good-night, Miss Hereford."

He left the room. Lady Chandos said she was tired too, and she and I went out together. Mr. Chandos, who had stayed in the hall, speaking to Hickens, went up just before us, entered his room, and closed the door. I turned into mine; and I heard Lady Chandos traverse the long gallery and shut herself into the west wing.

Instead of undressing, what should I do but sit down and open my book again. Only for two minutes, of course, said I to my conscience. It was that most charming of all romances, whether of Scott's works or of others', the "*Bride of Lammermoor*," which Mr. Chandos had given me out the previous day. The two minutes grew into—but that I have to do it, I should not confess how many, especially as I could only guess at the number. My watch—the pretty watch of Selina's, given me so long ago by Mr. Edwin Barley—had latterly acquired a trick of stopping. It had been so delightful! sitting there with that enchanting romance, the window open to the bright night and balmy air.

Perhaps, after all, it was not more than twelve o'clock. I wound up the defaulting watch, shook it till it went again; set it at twelve by guess, and undressed slowly, and in silence. Then, putting out the light, I threw on a warm shawl, and leaned out at the window for a last look, before closing it. Which, of course, was a very senseless proceeding, although romantic. If Mademoiselle Annette could have seen me!

I stayed there, lost in thought; various interests jumbling themselves together in my mind. Lucy Ashton and the Master of Ravenswood; my own uncertain future and present disagreeable position; the curious mysteries that seemed to envelop Chandos; and the ominous proximity of Mr. Edwin Barley. As I leaned against the corner of the window, still as a statue, I was startled by observing a movement in the garden.

And a very extraordinary movement, too, if it was that of a rational being. Something dark, the height of a tall man, appeared to emerge from the clusters of trees skirting the lawn opposite, approach a few steps, and then dart in again; and this was repeated over and over again, the man advancing always nearer to the other end of the house. It was like the motions of one who wished to come on, yet feared being seen; a full minute he stood within those dark trees, each time that he penetrated them.

I watched, still as a mouse, and gazing eagerly, feeling like one chilled with a sudden fear. It was certainly very singular. When opposite the west wing, he stood for a minute out on the open greensward, and took

off his cap as he looked up at the windows. I recognized the features of Mr. Chandos. He wore a short cloak, which, in a degree, hid his figure; but there was no mistaking the face, for the moon shone full upon it. The next moment he crossed the grass, and disappeared within the narrow laurel path that led to the private entrance of the west wing.

How had he got out of his room? That he had not come out of its door, I felt sure; for I had been so silent that I must have heard it, had it opened; besides, that door of his would only open with a jerk and a creaking noise. If there was another door to his apartment, it must lead into the wing inhabited by Mrs. Chandos. Why had he been dodging about in that strange way in the grounds? and put on a cloak and cap to do it in, just as if he wished to disguise himself? And what could he want in the apartments of Lady Chandos in the middle of the night, when she was, no doubt, abed and asleep? Truly there *was* mystery at Chandos!

"Good morning, Miss Hereford."

The salutation came from Mr. Chandos, who was following me into the breakfast-room, having that instant quitted his own. I was going quickly; so was he; for we were late, and Lady Chandos liked punctuality. But she was not in the oak-parlour.

"That's right," he cried, when he saw the room empty. "I hope my mother has overslept herself too, and had as good a night as I have."

"Have you had a good night, sir?" came the involuntary question.

"Too good: a man does not want eight or nine hours' sleep. I dropped asleep the minute I got into bed last night, did not even hear my clock strike eleven, though it only wanted a few minutes to it; and I never awoke till twenty minutes to eight this morning. I was very tired last night."

Was Mr. Chandos mystifying me? Somehow it caused me vexation. My eyes had a resentful expression as I fixed them on his; which, of course, they had no right in the world to have.

"You did not go to sleep at eleven o'clock, sir."

"Indeed I did, Miss Hereford."

"Then you must have got up again, sir."

"Nothing of the sort! Why do you say that? I never woke until this morning!"

Standing there and deliberately saying this to my face, with every appearance of truth, could only be done to mislead—to deceive me. I had far rather he had struck me a blow; though *why*, I did not stay to ask myself.

"Mr. Chandos, I saw you in the grounds in the middle of the night!"

"Saw me in the grounds in the middle of the night!" he echoed.

"You were dreaming, Miss Hereford."

"No, sir; I was wide awake. It must have been getting on for one

o'clock. You had on a cloak and cap, and were dodging in and out of the trees."

"What trees?"

"Those opposite."

"Wearing a cloak and cap, and dodging in and out of the opposite trees! Well, that is good, Miss Hereford!"

His face wore an amused expression; his dark eyes—and they were looking dark as purple in the subdued light—were dancing with mirth. I turned cross. Some foolish thought, that Mr. Chandos would make a confidant of me in the morning, had run into my mind in the night.

"I don't possess a cloak, young lady."

"At any rate, sir, I saw you in one. A short one; a sort of cape. I saw your face quite plainly when you were looking up at the windows. The moon was as bright as day, and shining full upon you."

"It must decidedly have been my ghost, Miss Hereford."

"No, sir, it was yourself. I don't believe in ghosts. When you had finished your dance in and out of the trees, you crossed the grass to the laurel walk that leads down by the west wing."

"What do you say?"

The tone was an abrupt one; the manner had entirely changed: something like a glance of fear shot across the face of Mr. Chandos. But at that moment Hill came in.

"So you are back, Hill!" he exclaimed.

"I have been back an hour, sir. Mrs. Freeman's no worse, and I came by the Parliamentary train. And it is well I did come," added she, "for I found my lady ill!"

Mr. Chandos swung himself short round on his heel. "My mother ill! What is the matter with her?"

"Well, sir, I hardly know. I came to ask you to go up and see her."

"She was very well last night," he observed, striding up stairs on his way to the west wing.

"You had better begin breakfast, miss," Hill said to me. "My lady won't be down: I'll go and order it in."

"Am I to send any up to Lady Chandos, Hill?"

"I have taken my lady's breakfast up," was her answer.

The tea and coffee came in, and I waited; waited, and waited. When I had nearly given Mr. Chandos up, he came. His face was pale, troubled, and he appeared lost in inward thought. From the signs, I gathered that Lady Chandos's malady was serious.

"I fear you have found Lady Chandos worse than you anticipated, sir?"

"Yes—no—yes—not exactly," was the contradictory answer. "I hope it is nothing dangerous," he more collectedly added; "but she will not be able to leave her rooms to-day."

"Is she in bed, sir?"

"No; she is sitting up. My tea? thank you. You should not have waited for me, Miss Hereford."

He took his breakfast in silence, ringing once for Hickens, to ask after a paper that ought to have come. Afterwards he quitted the room, and I saw him go strolling across to the pine walk.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### IN THE IRONING-ROOM.

"WILL you allow me to repose a word of confidence in you, Miss Hereford and at the same time to tender an apology?"

Playing a little bit of quiet harmony, reading a little, musing a little, half an hour had passed, and I was leaning my back against the frame of the open window. Mr. Chandos had come across the grass unheard by me, and took me by surprise.

I turned, and stammered forth "Yes." His tones were cautious and low, as though he feared eavesdroppers, though no one was within hearing, or could have been, without being seen.

"You accused me of wandering out there last night," he began, sitting on the stone ledge of the window outside, his face turned to me, "and I rashly denied it to you. As it is within the range of possibility that you may see me there again at the same ghostly hour, I have been deliberating whether it may not be the wiser plan to impart to you the truth. You have heard of sleep-walkers?"

"Yes," I replied, staring at him.

"What will you say if I acknowledge to being one?"

Of course I did not know what to say, and stood there like a statue, looking foolish. The thought that rushed over my heart was, what an unhappy misfortune to attend the sensible and otherwise attractive Mr. Chandos.

"You see," he continued, "when you spoke, I did not know I had been out, and denied it, really believing you were mistaken."

"And do you positively walk in your sleep, sir?—go out of your room, out of the locked doors of the house, and pace the grounds?" I breathlessly exclaimed.

"Ay. Not a pleasant endowment, is it? Stranger things are heard of some who possess it: they spirit themselves on to the roofs of houses, to the tops of chimneys, and contrive to spirit themselves down again, without coming to harm. So far as I am aware, I have never yet attempted those ambitious feats."

"Does Lady Chandos know of this?"

"Of course. My mother saw me last night, I find: she felt unable to sleep, she says, thinking of poor Mrs. Freeman, and rose from her

bed. It was a light night, and she drew aside her curtains and looked from the window. But for her additional testimony, I might not have believed you yet, Miss Hereford."

"You seemed to be making for her apartments, sir,—for the little door in the laurel walk."

"Did I?" he carelessly rejoined. "What freak guided my steps thither, I wonder? Did you see me come back again?"

"No, sir. I did not stay much longer at the window."

"I dare say I came back at once. A pity you missed the sight a second time," he continued, with a laugh that sounded very much like a forced one. "Having decorated myself with a cloak and cap, I must have been worth seeing. I really did not know that I had a cloak in my dressing-closet, but I find there is an old one."

He sat still, pulling to pieces a white rose and scattering its petals one by one. His eyes seemed to seek any object rather than mine; his dark hair, looking in some lights almost purple, like his eyes, was impatiently pushed now and again from his brow. Altogether, there was something in Mr. Chandos that morning that jarred upon me—something that did not seem *true*.

"I cannot think, sir, how you could have gone down so quietly from your room. For the first time since I have been in your house—for the first time, I think, in my whole life—I sat up reading last night, and yet I did not hear you; unless, indeed, you descended by some egress through the east wing."

"Oh, you don't know how quiet and cunning sleep-walkers are: the stillness with which they carry on their migrations is incredible," was his rejoinder; "you must never be surprised at anything they do."

But I noticed one thing, that he did not deny the existence of a second door. In spite of his plausible reasoning, I could not divest myself of the conviction that he had not left his chamber by the entrance near mine.

"Is it a nightly occurrence, sir?"

"What—my walking about? Oh dear, no! Months and years sometimes elapse, and I have nothing of it. The last time I 'walked'—is not that an ominous word for the superstitious?—must be at least two years ago."

"And then only for one night, sir?"

"For more than one," he replied, a strangely-grave expression settling on his countenance. "So, if you see me again, Miss Hereford, do not be alarmed, or think I have taken sudden leave of my senses."

"Mr. Chandos, can nothing be done for you? To prevent it, I mean."

"Nothing at all."

"If—if Lady Chandos, or one of the men servants, were to lock you in the room at night?" I timidly suggested.

"And if I—finding egress stopped that way—were to precipitate

myself from the window, in my unconsciousness, what then, Miss Hereford?"

"Oh, don't talk of it!" I said, hiding my eyes with a shudder. "I do not understand these things: I spoke in ignorance."

"Happily, few do understand them," he replied. "I have given you this in strict confidence, Miss Hereford; you will, I am sure, regard it as such. No one knows of it except my mother; but she would not like you to speak of it to her."

"Certainly not. Then the servants do not know it?"

"Not one: not even Hill. It would be most disagreeable to me, were the unpleasant fact to reach them; neither might they be willing to remain in a house where there was a sleep-walker. The last time the roving fit was upon me, some of them unfortunately saw me from the upper window; they recognized me, and came to the conclusion, by some subtle force of reasoning, explainable only by themselves, that it was my 'fetch,' or ghost. It was the first time I had ever heard of ghosts of the living appearing," he added, with a slight laugh.

"Do you think they saw you last night?" was my next question.

"I hope not," he replied, in a tone meant to be a light one; but that, to my ear, told of ill-concealed anxiety.

"But—Mr. Chandos!—there are no windows in the servants' part of the house that look this way!" I exclaimed, the recollection flashing on me.

"There is one. That small gothic window in the turret. The fear that some of them may have been looking out is worrying my mother."

"It is that, perhaps, that has made Lady Chandos ill."

"Yes; they took me for my own ghost!" he resumed, apparently not having heard the remark. "You now perceive, possibly, why I have told you this, Miss Hereford? You would not be likely to adopt the ghostly view of the affair, and might have spoken of what you saw in the hearing of the servants, or of strangers. You have now the secret: will you keep it?"

"With my whole heart, sir," was my impulsive rejoinder. "No allusion to it shall ever pass my lips." And Mr. Chandos took my hand, held it for a moment, and then departed, leaving me to digest the revelation.

It was a strange one; and I asked myself whether this physical infirmity attaching to him was the cause of what had appeared so mysterious at Chandos. That it might account for their not wishing to have strangers located at Chandos, sleeping in the house, was highly probable. Why! was not I myself an illustration of the case in point? I, a young girl, scarcely a week in the house, and it had already become expedient to entrust me with the secret! Oh, yes! no wonder, no wonder that they shunned visitors at Chandos! To me it seemed a most awful affliction.

I quitted the oak-parlour, and went up stairs. Hill stood in the corridor.

"Lady Chandos is up, I understand, Hill?"

"Well, I don't know where you could have understood that," was Hill's rejoinder, spoken in a sullen and resentful tone. "My lady up, indeed! ill as she is! If she's out of her bed in a week hence, it will be time enough. I don't think she will be."

I declare that the words so astonished me as to take my senses temporarily away, and Hill was gone before I could speak again. Which of the two told the truth, Mr. Chandos or Hill? He said his mother was up; Hill said she was not, and would not be for a week to come.

Meanwhile Hill had traversed the gallery, and disappeared in the west wing, banging the green-baize door after her. I stood in deliberation. Ought I, or ought I not, to proffer a visit to Lady Chandos?—to inquire if I could do anything for her. It seemed to me that it would be respectful so to do, and I moved forward and knocked gently at the green-baize door.

There came no answer, and I knocked again—and again; softly always. Then I pushed it open and entered. I found myself in a narrow passage, richly carpeted, with a handsome oak door before me. I gave a stout knock at that, and the green-baize door made a noise in swinging to. Out rushed Hill. If ever terror was implanted in a woman's face, it was so then in hers.

"Heaven and earth, Miss Hereford! Do you want to send me into my grave with fright?" ejaculated she.

"I have not frightened you! What have I done?"

"Done! Do you know, miss, that no soul is permitted to enter these apartments when my lady is ill, except myself and Mr. Chandos? I knew it was not he; and I thought—I thought—I don't know what I did not think. Be so good, miss, as not to serve me so again."

Did she take me for a wild tiger, that she made all that fuss? "I wish to see Lady Chandos," I said aloud.

"Then you can't see her, miss," was the peremptory retort.

"That is, if it be agreeable to her to receive me," I continued, resenting Hill's assumption of authority.

"But it is not agreeable, and it never can be agreeable," returned Hill, working herself up to a great pitch of excitement. "Don't I tell you, Miss Hereford, my lady never receives in these rooms? Perhaps, miss, you'll be so good as to quit them."

"At least you can take my message to Lady Chandos, and inquire whether——"

"I can't deliver any message, and I decline to make any inquiries," interrupted Hill, evidently in a fever of anxiety for my absence. "Excuse me, Miss Hereford, but you will please return by the way you came."

Who should appear next on the scene but Lady Chandos! She came from beyond the oak door, as Hill had done, apparently wondering at the noise. I was thunderstruck. She looked quite well, and wore her usual dress; but she went back again at once, and it was but a momentary glimpse I had of her. Hill made no ceremony. She took me by the shoulders as you would take a child, turned me towards the entrance, and bundled me out; shutting the green-baize door with a slam, and propping her back against it.

"Now, Miss Hereford, you must pardon me; and remember your obstinacy has just brought this upon yourself. I couldn't help it; for to have suffered you to talk to my lady to-day would have been almost a matter of life or death."

"I think you are out of your mind, Hill," I gasped, recovering my breath, but not my temper, after the summary exit.

"Perhaps I am, miss; let it go so. All I have got to say, out of my mind or in my mind, is this: never you attempt to enter this west wing. The rooms in it are sacred to my lady, whose pleasure it is to keep them strictly private. And intrusion here, after this warning, is what would never be pardoned you by any of the family, if you lived to be ninety years old!"

"Hill, you take too much upon yourself," was my indignant answer.

"If I do, my lady will correct me; so do not trouble your mind about that, Miss Hereford. I have not been her confidential attendant for sixteen years to be taught my duty now. And when I advise you to keep at a distance from these apartments, miss, I advise you for your own good. If you are wise, you will heed it: ask Mr. Chandos."

She returned within the wing, and I heard a strong bolt slipped, effectually barring my entrance, had I felt inclined to disobey her; but I never felt less inclined for anything in my life than to do that. Certainly her warning had been solemnly spoken.

Now, who was insane?—I? or Lady Chandos? or Hill? It seemed to me that it must be one of us, for assuredly all this savoured of insanity. What was it that ailed Lady Chandos? That she was perfectly well in health, I felt persuaded; and she was up and dressed and active; no symptom whatever of the invalid was about her. Could it be that her mind was affected? or was she so overcome with grief at the previous night's exploits of Mr. Chandos as to be obliged to remain in retirement? The latter supposition appeared the more feasible—and I weighed the case in all its bearings.

But not quite feasible, either. For Hill appeared to be full mistress of the subject of the mystery, whatever it might be, and Mr. Chandos had said she had no suspicion of his malady. And, besides, would it be enough to keep Lady Chandos in for a week? I dwelt upon it all until my head ached; and, to get rid of my perplexities, I went strolling into the open air.

It was a fine sunshiny day, and the blue tint of the bloom upon the pine trees looked lovely in the gleaming light. I turned down a shady path on the left of the broad gravel drive, midway between the house and the entrance-gates. It took me to a part of the grounds where I had never yet penetrated, remote and very solitary. The path was narrow, scarcely admitting of two persons passing each other, and the privet hedge on either side, with the overhanging trees, imparted to it an air of excessive gloom. The path wound in its course; in turning one of its angles, I came right in face of some one advancing; some one who was so close as to touch me; and my heart leaped into my mouth. It was Mr. Edwin Barley.

"Good morning, young lady."

"Good morning, sir," I stammered, sick almost unto death, lest he should recognize me; though why that excessive dread of his recognition should be upon me, I could not possibly have explained. He was again trespassing on Chandos; but it was not for me, in my timidity, to tell him so; neither had I any business to set myself forward in upholding the rights of Chandos.

"All well at the house?" he continued.

"Yes, thank you. All, except Lady Chandos. She keeps her room this morning."

"You are a visitor at Chandos, I presume?"

"For a little time, sir."

"So I judged, when I saw you with Harry Chandos. That you were not Miss Chandos, who married the Frenchman, I knew, for you bear no resemblance to her; and she is the only daughter of the family. I fancied they did not welcome strangers at Chandos."

I made no answer; though he looked at me with his jet-black eyes as if waiting for it; the same stern, penetrating eyes as of old. How I wished to get away! But it was impossible to pass by him without rudeness, and he stood blocking up the confined path.

"Are you a confidential friend of the family?" he resumed.

"No, sir; I am not to be called a friend at all; quite otherwise. Until a few days ago, I was a stranger to them. Accident brought me then to Chandos, but my stay here will be temporary."

"I should be glad to make your acquaintance by name," he went on, never taking those terrible eyes off me. Not that the eyes in themselves were so very terrible; but the fear of my childhood had returned to me in all its force—a very bugbear. I had made the first acquaintance of Mr. Edwin Barley in a moment of fear—that is, he frightened me. Unintentionally on his own part, it is true, but with not less of effect upon me. The circumstances of horror (surely it is not too strong a word) that had followed, in all of which he was mixed up, had only tended to increase the feeling; and woman-grown though I was now, the meeting with him had brought it all back to me.

"Will you not favour me with your name?"

He spoke politely, quite as a gentleman, but I felt my face grow red, white, hot and cold. I had answered his questions, feeling that I dared not resist; that I feared to show him aught but civility; but—to give him my name; to rush, as it were, into the lion's jaws! No, I would not do that; and I plucked up what courage was left me.

"My name is of no consequence, sir. I am but a very humble individual, little more than a school girl. I was brought here by a lady, who, immediately upon her arrival, was recalled home by illness in her family, and I am in daily expectation of a summons from her; after which I dare say I shall never see Chandos or any of its inmates again. Will you be kind enough to allow me to pass?"

"You must mean Miss Chandos—I don't recollect her married name," said he, without stirring. "I heard she had been here; and left almost as soon as she came."

I bowed my head, and tried to pass him. I might as readily have tried to pass through the privet hedge.

"Some lady was taken away ill, yesterday," he resumed. "Who was it?"

"It was Mrs. Freeman."

"Oh! the companion. I thought as much. Is she very ill?"

"It was something of a fit, I believe. It did not last long."

"Those fits are ticklish things," he remarked. "I should think she will not be in a state to return for some time, if at all."

He had turned his eyes away now, and was speaking in a dreamy sort of tone. As I once heard him speak to Selina.

"They will be wanting some one to fill Mrs. Freeman's place, will they not?"

"I cannot say, I'm sure, sir. The family do not talk of their affairs before me."

"Who is staying at Chandos now?" he abruptly asked.

"Only the family."

"Ah! the family—of course. I mean what members of it."

"All; except Madame de Mellissie and Sir Thomas Chandos."

"That is, there are Lady Chandos, her son, and daughter-in-law. That comprises the whole, I suppose—except you."

"Yes, it does. But I must really beg you to allow me to pass, sir."

"You are welcome now, and I am going to turn, myself. It is pleasant to have met an intelligent lady; and I hope we often shall meet, that I may hear good tidings of my friends at Chandos. I was intimate with part of the family once, but a coolness arose between us, and I do not go there. Good day."

He turned and walked rapidly back. I struck into the nearest side walk I could find that would bring me to the open grounds, and nearly struck against Mr. Chandos.

"Are you alone, Miss Hereford? I surely heard voices."

"A gentleman met me, sir, and spoke."

"A gentleman—in this remote part of the grounds!" he repeated, looking keenly at me, as a severe expression passed momentarily across his face. "Was it any one you knew?"

"It was he who came into the broad walk, and whom you ordered out—the new tenant. He is gone now."

"He! I fancied so," returned Mr. Chandos, the angry flush deepening. And it seemed almost as though he were angry with me.

"I found out the walk by accident, sir, and I met him in it. He stopped and accosted me with several questions, which I thought very rude of him."

"What did he ask you?"

"He wished to know my name, who I was, and what I was doing at Chandos; but I did not satisfy him. He then inquired about the family, asking what members of it were at home."

"And you told him?"

"There was no need to tell him, sir, for he mentioned the names to me: yourself, Lady, and Mrs. Chandos."

"Ethel! he mentioned her, did he! What did he call her?—Mrs. Chandos?"

"He did not mention her by name, sir; he said 'daughter-in-law.'" I did not tell Mr. Chandos that the designation made an impression upon me, establishing the supposition that Mrs. Chandos *was* a 'daughter-in-law.'

"And pray what did he call me?"

"Harry Chandos."

"Well, now mark me, Miss Hereford. That man accosted you to worm out what he could of our every-day life at home. His name is Barley—Edwin Barley. He is a bitter enemy of ours, and if he could pick up any scrap of news or trifle of fact that he could by possibility turn about and work so as to injure us, he would do it."

"But how could he, sir?" I exclaimed, not understanding.

"His suspicions are no doubt aroused that—that—I beg your pardon, Miss Hereford," he abruptly broke off, with the air of one who has said more than he meant to say. "These matters cannot interest you. You—you did not tell Mr. Barley what I imparted to you this morning, touching myself?"

"Oh, Mr. Chandos, how can you ask the question? Did I not promise you to hold it sacred?"

"Forgive me," he gently said; "nay, I am sorry to have pained you."

He had pained me in no slight degree, and the tears very nearly rose in my eyes. I would rather be beaten with rods than have my good faith slighted. I think Mr. Chandos saw something of this in my face.

"Believe me, I do not doubt you for a moment; but Edwin Barley,

in all that regards our family, is cunning and crafty. Be upon your guard, should he stop you again, not to betray aught of our affairs at Chandos, the little daily occurrences of home life. A chance word, to all appearance innocent and trifling, might work incalculable mischief to us, even ruin. Will you remember this, Miss Hereford?"

I promised him I would, and went back to the house, he continuing his way. At the end of the privet-walk a gate led to the open country, and I supposed Mr. Chandos had business there. As I reached the portico a gentleman was standing there with the butler, asking to see Lady Chandos. It was Mr. Jarvis, the curate.

"My lady is sick in bed, sir," was Hickens's reply, his long, grave face giving ample token that he held belief in his own words.

"I am sorry to hear that. Is her illness serious?"

"Rather so, sir, I believe. Mrs. Hill fears it will be days before her ladyship is down again. She used to be subject to dreadful bilious attacks: I suppose it's one of them come back again."

The curate gave in a card, left a message, and departed. So it appeared that Hill was regaling the servants with the same story that she had told me. I could have spoken up, had I dared, and said there was nothing the matter with the health of Lady Chandos.

At six o'clock I went down to dinner, wondering who would preside. I have said that no ceremony was observed at Chandos, the everyday life was simple in the extreme. Since the departure of Emily de Mellissie we had sat in the oak-parlour, and all the meals were taken there. In fact, there was nobody to sit but myself. Lady Chandos had been mostly in the west wing; Mr. Chandos out, or in his study; Mrs. Chandos I never saw. The servants were placing the soup on the table. In another moment Mr. Chandos came in.

"A small company, this evening, Miss Hereford; only you and I," he laughed, as we took our seats.

"Is Lady Chandos not sufficiently well to dine, sir?" I asked.

"She will eat something, no doubt. Hill takes care of her mistress. I met her carrying up the tray as I came down."

"I hope I am not the cause of your dining down stairs," I rejoined, the unpleasant thought striking me that it might be so. "Perhaps, but for me, you would take your dinner with Lady Chandos?"

"Nothing of the sort, I assure you. Were it not for you, I should sit here in solitary state, and eat my lonely dinner with what appetite I might. And a solitary dinner is not good for the digestion, the doctors tell us. Did any one call while I was out, Hickens?"

"Only Mr. Jarvis, sir. I think he wanted to see my lady about the new schools. He was very particular in asking what was the matter with her, and I said I thought it might be one of those old bilious attacks come on again. My lady had a bad one or two at times, years ago, sir, you may remember."

"Ay," replied Mr. Chandos; but it was all the comment he made.

"Is Lady Chandos subject to bilious attacks?" I inquired of Mr. Chandos.

"Not particularly. She has been free from them latterly."

"Did you know, sir," continued Hickens, "that we have had news of Mrs. Freeman?"

"No. When did it come? I hope it's good."

"Not very good, sir. It came half-an-hour ago. She had another fit to-day, in the forenoon, and it's certain now that she won't be able to come back here for a long while, if she is at all. The relation that she is with wrote to Mrs. Hill, who took up [the note to my lady. Hill says, when she left her there were symptoms of a second attack coming on."

Mr. Chandos leaned back for a moment in his chair, forgetful that he was at dinner, and not alone. He was in a reverie; but, as his eye fell on me, he shook it off, and spoke.

"Her not returning will prove an inconvenience to Mrs. Chandos."

"I am afraid it will, sir," rejoined Hickens, who had fancied himself addressed; though, in point of fact, Mr. Chandos had but unconsciously spoken aloud his thoughts. Hickens had been a long while in the family, was a faithful and valued servant, consequently he thought himself at liberty to talk in season and out of season. "I warned Mrs. Chandos's maid, sir, not to tell her mistress about Mrs. Freeman's being worse," he went on. "It would do no good, and only worrit her."

Mr. Chandos slightly nodded, and the dinner then proceeded in silence. At its conclusion Mr. Chandos, after taking one glass of wine, rose.

"I must apologize for leaving you alone, Miss Hereford, but I believe my mother will expect me to sit with her. Be sure you make yourself at home; and ring for tea when you wish for it."

"Shall you not be in to tea, sir?"

"I think not. At all events, don't wait."

Dreary enough was it for me, sitting in that great solitary room—not solitary in itself, but from want of tenants.

I went and stood at the window. The wax-lights were burning, but nothing but the muslin curtains were before the windows. There was no one to overlook the room; comers to the house did not pass it; the servants had no business whatever in the front; and very often the shutters were not closed until bed-time. It was scarcely yet to be called dark: the atmosphere was calm and clear, and a bright white light came from the west. Putting on a shawl, I went quietly out.

It was nearly, for me, as dreary out-of-doors as in. All seemed still; no soul was about; no voices were to be heard; no cheering lights gleamed from the windows. I was daring enough to walk to the end and look up at the west wing; a slight glimmering, as of fire, sparkled

up now and again in what I had understood was Lady Chandos's sitting-room. Back to the east wing, and looked at the end of that. Plenty of cheerful blaze there, both of fire and candle; and, once, the slight form of Mrs. Chandos appeared for a minute at the window, looking out.

I passed on to the back of the house, by the servants' ordinary path, round the east wing. It was a good opportunity for seeing what the place was like. But I did not bargain for the great flood of light into which I was thrown on turning the angle. It proceeded from the corner room; the windows were thrown wide open, and some maid-servants were ironing at a long board underneath. Not caring that they should see me, I drew under the cover of a projecting shed, that I believe belonged to the brew-house, and took a leisurely survey. Plenty of life here; plenty of buildings; it seemed like a colony. Lights shone from several windows of the long edifice—as long as it was in front. The entrance was in the middle; a poultry-yard lay at the other end; a pasture for cows opposite; the range of stables could be seen in the distance.

Harriet and Emma were the two maids ironing; Lizzy, a very dark young woman of thirty, with a bunch of wild-looking black curls on either side her face, sat by the ironing-stove, doing nothing. These three, it may be remembered, have been mentioned as the house-maids. Another woman, whom I did not recognize, but knew her later for the laundry-maid, was at the back, folding clothes. They were talking fast, but very distinctly, in that half-covert tone which betrays the subject to be a forbidden one. The conversation and the stove's heat were alike wafted to me through the open window.

"You may preach from now until to-morrow morning," were the first words I heard, and they came from Harriet; "but you will never make me believe that people's ghosts can appear before they die. It is not in nature's order."

"*His* appears. I'll stand to that. And what's more, I'll stand to it that I saw it last night!" cried Lizzy, looking up and speaking in strong, fierce jerks, as she was in the habit of doing. "I sat up in the bedroom sewing. It's that new black-silk polka of mine that I wanted to finish, and if I got it about down-stairs, Madam Hill would go on above a bit about finery. Emma got into bed and lay awake talking, her and me. Before I'd done, my piece of candle comes to an end, and I thought I'd go into Harriet's room and borrow hers. It was a lovely night, the moon shone slantways in at the turret window, and something took me that I'd have a look out. So I went up the turret stairs and stood at the casement. I'd not been there a minute before I saw it—the living image of Mr. Chandos!—and I thought I should have swooned away. Ask Emma."

"Well, I say it might have been Mr. Chandos himself, but it never was his ghost," argued Harriet.

"You might be a soft, but I dare say you'd stand to it you are not," retorted Lizzy. "Don't I tell you that in the old days we saw that apparition when Mr. Harry was safe in his bed? When we knew him to be in his bed with that attack of fever he had? I saw it twice then with my own eyes. And once, when Mr. Harry was miles and miles away—gone over to that French place where Miss Emily was at school—it came again. Half the household saw it; and a fine commotion there was! Don't tell me, girl! I've lived in the family six years. I came here before old Sir Thomas died."

There was a pause. Harriet, evidently not discomfited, whisked away her iron to the stove, changed it, and came back again, before she spoke.

"I don't know anything about back times; the present ones is enough for me. Did you see this, Emma, last night?"

"Yes, I did," replied Emma, who was a silent and rather stupid-looking girl, with a very retreating chin. "Lizzy came rushing back into the room, saying the ghost had come again, and I ran after her up to the turret window. Something was there, safe enough."

"Who was it like?"

"Mr. Chandos. There was no mistaking him: one does not see a tall, thin, upright man like him every day. There was his face, too, and his beautiful features quite plain; the moon gave a light like day."

"It was himself, as I said," coolly contended Harriet.

"It was not," said Lizzy. "Mr. Chandos would no more have been dancing in and out of the trees in that fashion, like a jack-in-the-box, than he'd try to fly in the air. It was the ghost at its tricks again."

"But the thing is incredible," persisted Harriet. "Let us suppose, for argument's sake, that it is Mr. Chandos's ghost that walks, what does it come for, Lizzy?"

"I never heard that ghosts stooped to explain their motives. How should we know why it comes?"

"And I never heard yet that ghosts of live people came at all," continued Harriet, in recrimination. "And I don't think anybody else ever did."

"But you know that's only your ignorance, Harriet. Certain people are born into the world with their own fetches or wraiths, which appear sometimes with them, sometimes at a distance, and Mr. Chandos must be one. I knew a lady's maid of that kind. While she was with her mistress in Scotland, her fetch used to walk about in England, startling acquaintances into fits. Some people call 'em doubles."

"But what's the use of them?" reiterated Harriet; "what do they do? That's what I want to know."

"Harriet, don't you be profane, and set up your back against spiritual things," rebuked Lizzy. "There was a man in our village, over beyond Marden, that never could be brought to reverence such; he

mocked at 'em like any heathen, saying he'd fight single-handed the best ten ghosts that ever walked, for ten pound a-side, and wished he could get the chance. What was the awful consequences? Why that man, going home one night from the beer-shop, marched right into the canal in mistake for his own house-door, and was drowned."

Emma replenished the stove, took a fresh iron, singed a rag in rubbing it, and continued her work. The woman, folding clothes at the back, turned round to speak.

"How was the notion first took up—that it was Mr. Chandos's ghost?"

"This way," said Lizzy, as if from her longer period of service in the family she assumed to know more than the rest. "It was about the time of Sir Thomas's death; just before it, or after it, I forget which now. Mr. Harry—as he was mostly called when he was younger—was ill with that low fever; it was said something had worried him and brought the sickness on. My lady, by token, was poorly at the same time, and kept her rooms; and, now that I remember, Sir Thomas *was* dead, for she wore her widow's caps. At the very time Mr. Harry was in his bed, this figure, his very self, was seen at night in the grounds. That was the first of it."

"If there's one thing more deceptive than another, it's night-light," meekly observed the woman.

"The next time was about two years after that," resumed Lizzy, ignoring the suggestion. "Mr. Harry was in France, and one of the servants stopped out late one evening without leave: Phoeby it was, who's married now. She had missed the train and had to walk, and it was between twelve and one when she got in, and me and Ann sitting up for her in a desperate fright lest Mrs. Hill should find it out. In she came, all in a fluster, saying Mr. Harry was in the shrubbery, and she was afraid he had seen her. Of course, we thought it was Mr. Harry come home, and that the house would be called up to serve refreshments for him. But nothing happened; no bells rang, and to bed we went. The next morning we found he had not come home, and finely laughed at Phoeby, asking her what she had taken to obscure her eyesight—which made her very mad. Evening came, and one of them telegraph messages came over the sea to my lady from Mr. Harry, proving he was in the French town. But law! that night, there he was in the dark pine path again, walking up and down it, and all us maids sat up and saw him. My lady was ill again then, I remember; she does have bad bouts now and then."

"Do you mean to say you all saw him?" questioned Harriet.

"We all saw him, four or five of us," emphatically repeated Lizzy. "Hickens came to hear of it, and called us all the simpletons he could lay his tongue to. He told Hill—leastways, we never knew who did if he didn't—and didn't she make a commotion. If ever she heard a

syllable of such rubbish from us again, she said, we should all go packing: and she locked up the turret-door, and kept the key in her pocket for weeks."

"You see, what staggers one is that Mr. Chandos should be alive," said Harriet. "One could understand it if he were dead."

"Nothing that's connected with ghosts, and them things, ought to stagger one at all," dissented Lizzy.

"According to you, Lizzy, the ghost only appears by fits and starts."

"No more it does. Every two or three years, or so. Any way it has been once since the time I tell you of when Mr. Chandos was abroad, which is four years ago, and now it's here again."

"One would think you watched for it, Lizzy!"

"And so I do. Often of a moonlight night, I get out of bed and go to that turret-window."

Some one came quickly down the path at this juncture, brushing by me, as I stood in the shade. It was the still-room maid. She had a bundle in her hand, went on to the entrance, and thence came into the ironing-room. Hill followed her in; but the latter remained at the back, looking at some ironed laces on a table, and not one of the girls noticed her presence. The still-room maid advanced to the ironing-board, let fall her bundle on it, and threw up her arms in some excitement.

"I say, you know Mrs. Peters, over at the brook! Well—she's dead."

"Dead!" echoed the girls, pausing in their work. "Why it was not a week ago that she was here."

"She's dead. They were laying her out when I came by just now. Some fever, they say, which took her off in no time; a catching fever, too. A mortal fright it put me in, to hear that; I shouldn't like to die yet awhile."

"If fever has broke out in the place, who knows but it's fever that has taken my lady!" exclaimed Emma, her stupid face alive with consternation: and the rest let their irons drop on their stands. "All our lives may be in jeopardy."

"Your places will be in greater jeopardy if you don't pay a little more attention to work, and leave off talking nonsense," called out the sharp voice of Mrs. Hill from the background. The servants started round at its sound, and the irons were taken up again.

(To be continued.)

## THE WORLD AND THE SONG.

BY CHARLES MACKAY, LL.D.

WHAT recks the lark in the morning sky  
Of the ploughman in the furrow,  
Whether he listen to the song,  
Or drive his patient team along  
With not a thought but—thorough?

What recks the nightingale in the wood,  
Lamenting or adoring,  
Whether the lovers in the lane  
Bestow a thought on the bliss or pain  
Of his passionate outpouring?

And what care I, oh, busy world,  
Singing at night or morning,  
Whether the music of my line,  
Made for my pleasure, not for thine,  
Receive thy praise or scorning?

I sing with the fresh green leaves around,  
And the clear blue sky above me,  
Not for the traders of the mart,  
But for the soothing of my heart,  
And the joy of those who love me.

So grind thy wheel, thou weary world,  
Thou'rt not my soul's enslaver;  
The free bird up in the morning air  
Is as independent of thy care,  
As I of thy lightest favour!

## HALF AN HOUR'S WALK IN NORMANDY.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

THE perfection of a walk, as I understand walks, is to be found near Honfleur, in Normandy. Like a good sermon, or a sweet strain of music, a walk should not be too long for ordinary capacities, and there should be no tedious, uninteresting passage in it, which allows the spirit to fall back into brooding upon itself: all three should have variety enough, eloquence enough to charm the soul out of its dark inner cell, where it muses eternally over its own longings and emotions. A walk should be neither a march, nor an excursion, nor a pilgrimage, but a pleasure pure and simple, with no element of merit or self-gratulation about it; in short, no element of self at all.

Supposing, then, that we are at the right end of Honfleur, so as to escape passing through the dark, narrow, ill-smelling, badly-paved streets of a small French sea-port, we enter at once upon our walk by a road, half lane, half highway, which rises at a tolerably steep incline up the side of a hill. Standing at the bottom of this slope, and looking up it, is like looking along some vast green aisle, which does not contract itself into any narrow angle rendered dark by distance, but which, with a play of light and shadow, and the dance of sunbeams through the waving branches of the trees, allures the eye onward and upward to the point whither it leads—a small field of heavenly blue—you can scarcely tell whether to call it sky or no, against which stands a crucifix bearing the Christ; a Calvary they call it here, for the cross is set upon two or three tiers of steps, where, at any hour of the day, you may chance to see a picturesque group of worshippers on their knees. The distance up the hill is not more than ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour at the longest, though one must needs linger in mingled idleness and luxury of admiration. On the left hand rises the cliff, with its half of the tall, slim trees which form the avenue overshadowing thickly the ascent, and with a profusion of wild flowers and arums—lord and ladies of a regal purple and delicate creamy white, which would have made our hearts too big with joy when we were children. On the right, the crag—it is a sea-crag, though it is clothed with a soft surface-beauty of verdure—falls precipitately down to the low, alluvial strip of land which the earth has redeemed from the sea along the beach of the broad river Seine; a strip of land covered with orchards, where there are cherry and pear-trees as high as the elms of our own country, and cider-apple trees, with knotted or twisted

branches, which look like a mere brown tangle of twigs set upon their stunted trunks. If it be but spring-time, every bough has budded into thousands of blossoms, until every tree seems covered—not with snow, though that is the first word which rises to the lips, but with a whiteness almost snowy, only that there is in the heart of every flower a crimson or golden flush, which casts its own tint through the transparent, waxy petals, until over all there is a faint rosy tinge or a gilded lustre. In passing glimpses, between the close ranks of the trees, and through the tangle of the orchards, is seen here and there a sparkle of moving brightness, a glistering light which is not from the sky, but from its faithful mirror, the river flowing behind the veil of green leaves which screens it and hides it from us till we reach the summit.

The ascent finished, no laborious task in the shade, with a cool waft from the water stirring the air and rustling the leaves, we come upon a soft, green, smooth level,—a meadow it might be called; but it is not enclosed for the growth of hay, and there are too many trees about it; a grove rather, only the trees are huge and hoary, forest trees with gnarled and furrowed trunks, and foreheads like flints set against the shock of the tempests swooping towards them across the sea, which lies shimmering yonder in the sunshine like a great opal set in the dark blue rim of the sky-line. The trees are not closely ranged enough for a grove, but stand apart from one another in the grassy sward, only mingling their smaller branches over head, and interlacing their roots under foot. Beneath their shadow stands a quaint, ugly little chapel, with a round roofed porch, and three bells above it struck by hammers; a place with no beauty about it, yet possessing a sort of homeliness in no unpleasant contrast to the majesty of the grand old trees surrounding it. The crucifix stands alone in a cleared space, looking across the sea, or, rather, across the Seine, where it meets the waves and tides of the ocean, and surrenders its waters to them. From the foot of this Calvary can be seen the broad stream of the river for thirty miles along its course between limestone crags, which put on every tint of crimson, and purple, and gold, as the sun rises and sets upon them; while the clouds play fantastic tricks with the faithful waters, causing them to darken and gloom as they themselves roll heavily across the sky, or kindling them with stray gleams of emerald green and golden sunshine, which chase one another sportively up the long reach of the river. Now and then there flickers upon the stream, somewhere in some favoured spot which never chances to be where we are, a sort of rainbow mist; not a rainbow, but a floating, fleeting vapour of violet, and amber, and ruby light, gliding hither and thither like some fairy will-o'-the-wisp. Exactly opposite to us is Harfleur; no real place to us, but a dream-town, nestling in the rounded hollow of a green dingle, with a girdle of hills about it, and the river before it; a thin, dream-like haze always drawn about it, and its church spire, like a gauzy curtain; some-

times—though it is seven or eight miles away, so wide is the river which flows between us and it—we hear a clear chime of bells ringing to us over the water from that fair vision of a phantom city, but its very clearness and melody confirms us in our fancies. Farther on, towards the sea, running to a needle-like point into its tides, is Havre; and if the sun be set, dipping down as it does into the western waves beyond which lies England, there will be visible, upon the wonderful line of amber light which follows the sunset, two diamonds, sparkling more brightly than ever diamonds sparkled upon kingly brows, on the very front of the seaward headland of Havre. They tell you they are electric lights, the beacons which warn off vessels from the rocky coast; and being such, they are more precious than the most peerless brilliant; and the sky, or the earth—you cannot tell which—wears them proudly, and as the night settles down they burn with brighter and purer lustre.

Beyond Havre lies the open sea; that most changeable and most fascinating of all creatures. Whether it be in storm or calm, one's eye never wearies of the water. But here, under the Calvary on the Côte at Honfleur, is the wedding of river-life with sea-life; out yonder, off the bar at Havre, are anchored a score or two of merchant-ships, waiting for the tide to float them into harbour. Under the opposite shore is a train of three or four vessels, with naked masts, being tugged up the river towards Royen. Little boats, trimming their sails to the breeze, are steering homewards to the little port of Honfleur; or, it may be, you will see a procession of small craft coming in from a reef of rocks some few miles out at sea, where the fishwomen go at low water to pick up the shell-fish left by the tide; you can hear their laughter, and see the gleam of their white caps, as the boats glide along at the foot of the cliff, with a noiseless, almost imperceptible motion, which awakens the same sense of unreality as the fairy-like apparition of Harfleur opposite.

Leaving the grove of hoary elms, we enter upon a real lane, a thorough English lane, but with something more of luxuriant neglect about it than is often to be found in England now; a wild, sweet freedom, as if grass, and flower, and tree were left to grow at their own will. The tall, thin trees, shooting up in too close a companionship for full and separate strength, form a thick, high trellis of green foliage on each side; while the hedgerows, high above one's head, send out straggling sprays of rose-briars, clasped about with the tendrils of the honeysuckle. Here and there are a row of pollard-trees, with boughs growing out like a fan, or lying horizontally, so as to form a low ceiling of living verdure just above our heads. This lane has many turns, as every lane should have; and by-and-by we come to a rank of beeches, with limbs as rounded and smooth, I had almost said as muscular, as the limbs of some skilfully sculptured marble, and, like it, shining with a lustre which, catching the light upon its delicate curves, reflects it in a soft, silvery brightness. A few paces beyond we look down into a dell,

so thronged with multitudinous sylvan life that the greatest city in the world is sparsely populated in comparison. What tragedies are wrought out here ! what miseries and joys are consummated ! Standing still for a minute, we hear the numberless diversities of voices which haunt the woods, from the clear, glad song of the blackbird to the low, feeble note of the grasshopper, inaudible to many ears, and the familiar chirp of the cricket ; house-crickets which know nothing of houses or the delights of warm hearths.

Another row of beeches, looking a little more battered and weather-worn than the first, with less lustre upon them, and we come upon a heath—a sweet, breezy heath, with a gorgeous mantle of purple heather and yellow gorse, and its rich lining of the brightest green. The sea seems to enfold it with its glassy belt ; but, in reality, it is lifted high above its reach, on a level with the summit of the ascent by which we gained the Calvary. The air is scented from its own purity, for the freshness of the sea-breeze is added to the freshness of the high, open flat, where the winds love to meet. What was lacking in the bordered lane, and amidst the trees, is found in perfection here. The grand vault of the sky sweeps over you in round, free outlines, intersected by no earth-born line. You are under no shadow ; there is no limit to fret and confine your gaze. Off away to the west stretches the pearly ocean, shot through with many tints, changing colour and aspect every moment ; and nothing comes between you and it except the fine points of some young pine-trees, which border the heath in that direction. Nothing that is of the earth touches you, is near to you, except the two small spots of turf on which your feet rest. A narrow band of glistening waters appears to lie between the edge of the common and the distant opposite shore, where are Havre and Harfleur. And before us, straight along the grassy path we are treading, lies the goal of our walk, a coppice of fir-trees.

A fir-wood—one of the grandest, gravest, loveliest, most solemn places to be found in this world. To enter it is like entering a cathedral ; the bronzed and slender shafts are like the polished pillars of a temple ; the curved and pointed branches overhead, with their solemn depth of shadow, are like its fretted roof. Under foot the earth is brown and soundless, with a carpet of fallen needle-like leaflets, which have died away from their places, as we do, unmissed in the eternity of the life of which they formed an undistinguishable part. There is seldom the chirping of birds, or the hum of insects to be heard, but always a low, shivering, awe-stricken murmur running through the topmost, trembling branches. They used to tell me, before I had ever stood upon the sea-shore, that the sound of the waves was like that ceaseless ripple of sighing in the tops of the pine-trees ; but there is no liquid splash here, such as the water rings out musically, none of the rhythm and rhyme of the sea, but in its stead a suppressed, almost

breathless, sacred tone of awe, which fills one with a profound quietude of spirit. There is no other sound like it; no coppice like a fir-coppice. The yew-tree is too gloomy and too ghostly, the beech too earthly and sensuous; one is almost a heathen among either of them; but in a fir-coppice, silent and subdued, one is a Christian in a Christian temple.

And the silence is so silent! All about you stand those unnumbered shafts which support the darksome roof above, and there is no crackling of branches, or rustling of dead leaves, as you walk to and fro along its aisles. If you listen very closely, you may hear the faint, tiny snap with which the fir-cones unloose their sealed scales, to set free the winged seed within them. But there is no other sound; and your own voice grows softer if you should choose to disturb the almost divine stillness by any words of human speech; until, with a sigh, answering to the eternal sigh through the trees, you turn away from the soothing lull and calm, and set your face once more towards the chattering streets you left half an hour ago.

For all this is contained within half an hour's walk, unhurried and leisurely; and, therefore, I say again, what I said at starting, the perfection of a walk may be found near Honfleur, in Normandy.



#### TOO LATE.

ONLY a dreamful slumber,  
But high has soared the sun;  
Only a moment wasted,  
A duty left undone.  
Only a word unspoken  
(Was thine the blame, oh, Fate?)  
Only a promise broken,  
Only an hour too late.  
Only a half-hushed whisper  
Instead of laughter sweet;  
Only a stranger shadow  
Where once fell gentle feet.  
Only the close-drawn curtains  
Around a quiet bed;  
Only the white hands folded,  
Only the peaceful dead.

### SANKER'S VISIT.

HIS name was Sanker, and he was related to Mrs. Todhetley. Not expecting to go home for the holidays—for his people lived in some far-off district of Wales, and did not afford him the journey—Tod invited him to spend them with us at Dyke Manor: which was uncommonly generous, for he disliked Sanker beyond everything. Having plenty of money himself, Tod could not bear that a connection of his should be known as nearly the poorest and meanest in the school, and resented it awfully. But he could not be ill-natured, for all his prejudices, and he asked Sanker to go home with us.

"It's slow there," he said; "not much going on in summer besides haymaking; but it may be an improvement on this. So, if you'd like to come, I'll write and tell them."

"Thank you," said Sanker; "I should like it very much."

Things had been queer at school as the term drew to its close. Petty pilferings were taking place; articles and money alike disappeared. Tod lost half-a-sovereign; one of the masters some silver; Bill Whitney put sevenpence halfpenny and a set of enamelled studs into his desk one day, never to see either again; and Snepp, who had been home to his sister's marriage, lost a piece of wedding-cake out of his box the night he came back. There was a thief in the school, and no clue to him. One might mentally accuse this fellow, another that; but not a shadow of proof was there against any. Altogether we were not sorry to get away.

But the curious thing was, that soon after we got home pilferings began there. Ned Sanker was well received; and Tod, regarding himself in the capacity of host, grew more cordial with him than he had been at school. It was a sort of noblesse oblige feeling. Sanker was sixteen; stout and round; not tall; with pale eyes and a dull face. He was to be a clergyman; funds at his home permitting. His father lived at some mines in Wales. Tod wondered in what capacity.

"Mr. Sanker was a gentleman born and bred," explained Mrs. Todhetley. "He never had much money; but what little it was he lost, speculating in this very mine. After that, when he had nothing in the world left to live upon, and a wife and several young children to keep, he was thankful to take a situation as over-looker at a small yearly salary."

We had been home about a week when the first thing was missed. At one side of the house, in a sort of nook, was a square room, its glass-

doors opening on the gravel path that skirted the hedge of the vegetable garden. Squire Todhetley kept his farming accounts there and wrote his letters. A barometer and two county maps, Worcestershire and Warwickshire, on its walls, a square of matting on its floor, an upright bureau, a table, some chairs; and there you have the picture of the room.

One afternoon—mind! we did not know this for a week after, but it is as well to tell of it as it occurred—he was sitting at the table in this room, his account-books, kept in the bureau, open before him; his ink-stand and cash-box at hand. Lying near the cash-box was a five-pound note, open; the Squire had put it out for Dwarf Giles to get changed at Alcester. He was writing an order for some things that Giles would have to bring back, when Rimmell, who acted as working bailiff on the estate, came to the glass-doors, open to the warm June air, saying he had received an offer for the wheat that had spurted. The squire stepped outside on the gravel path while he talked with Rimmell, and then strolled round with him to the fold-yard. He was away—that is, out of sight of the room—about three minutes, and when he got back the note was gone.

He could not believe his own eyes. It was a calm day; no wind stirring. He lifted the things on the table; he lifted the matting on the floor; he shook his loose coat; all in vain. Standing at the door, he shouted aloud; he walked along the path to the front of the house, and shouted there; but was not answered. So far as could be seen, no person whatever was about who could have come round to the room during his short absence.

Striding back to the room, he went through it, and up the passage to the hall, his boots creaking. Molly was in the kitchen, singing over her work; Phœby and Hannah were heard talking upstairs; and Mrs. Todhetley stood in the store-room, doing something to the last year's pots of jam. She said, on being questioned, that no one had passed to the passage leading to the Squire's room.

It happened at that moment, that I, coming home from the Dyke, ran into the hall, full butt against the Squire.

"Johnny," said he, "where are you all? What are you up to?"

I had been at the Dyke all the afternoon with Tod and Hugh; they were there still. Not Sanker: he was outside, on the lawn, reading. This I told the Pater, and he said no more. Later, when we came to know what had happened, he mentioned to us that, at this time, no idea of robbery had entered his head; he thought one of us might have hidden the money in sport.

So much an impossibility did it appear of the note's having been lifted by human hands, that the Squire went back to his room in a maze. He could only think that it must have attached itself to his clothes, and dropped off them in the fold-yard. What had become of

it, goodness knew; whether it had fluttered into the pond, or the hens had scratched it to pieces, or the turkeys gobbled it up; he searched fruitlessly.

That was on a Thursday. On the following Thursday, when Tod was lying on the lawn bench on his back, playing with his tame magpie, and teasing Hugh and Lena, the Pater's voice was heard calling to him in a sharp, quick tone, as if something was the matter. Tod got up and went round by the gravel path to whence the sound came, and I followed. The Squire was standing at the window of the room, half in, half out.

"I don't want you, Johnny. Stay, though," he added, after a moment, "you may as well be told—why not?"

He sat down in his place at the table. Tod stood just inside the door, paying more attention to the magpie, which he had brought on his arm, than to his father: I leaned against the bureau. There was a minute's silence, waiting for the Squire to speak.

"Put that wretched bird down," he said; and we knew something had put him out, for he rarely spoke with sharpness to Tod.

Tod sent the magpie off, and came in. The first day we got home from school, Tod had rescued the magpie from Goody Picker's grandson; he caught him pulling the feathers out of its tail; gave him six-pence for it, and brought it home. A poor, miserable, half-starved thing, that somebody had taught to say continually, "Now then, Peter." Tod meant to feed it into condition; but the Pater had not taken kindly to the bird; he said it would be better dead than alive.

"What was that I heard you boys talking of the other day, about some petty pilferings in your school?" he asked, abruptly. And we gave him the history.

"Well, as it seems to me, the same thing is going on here," he continued, looking at us both. "Johnny, sit down; I can't talk while you sway about like that."

"The same thing going on here, sir?"

"I say that it seems so," said the Pater, thrusting both his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and rattling the silver in them. "Last Thursday, this day week, a bank-note lay on my table here. I just went round to the yard with Rimmell, and when I got back the note was gone."

"Where did it go to?" asked Tod, practically.

"That is just the question—where? I concluded that it must have stuck to my coat in some unaccountable way, and got lost out of doors. I don't conclude so now."

Tod seemed to take the news in his usual careless fashion, and kept privately telegraphing signs to the magpie, sitting now on the old tree-stump opposite.

"Yes, sir. Well?"

"I think now, Joe, that somebody came in at these open doors, and took the note," said the Pater, impressively. "And I want to find out who it was."

"Now then, Peter!" cried the bird, hopping down on the gravel; at which Tod laughed. The Squire got up in a rage, and shut the doors with a bang.

"If you can't be serious for a few moments, you had better say so. I can tell you this is likely to turn out no laughing business."

Tod turned his back to the glass doors, and left the magpie to its devices.

"Whoever it was, contrived to slip round here from the front, during my temporary absence; possibly without ill intention: the sight of the note lying open might have proved too strong a temptation for him."

"Him!" put in Tod, critically. "It might have been a woman."

"You might be a jackass: and often are one," said the Pater. And it struck us both, from the affable retort, that his suspicions were pointing to some particular person of the male gender.

"This morning, after breakfast, I was here, writing a letter," he went on. "While sealing it, Thomas called me away in a hurry, and I was absent the best part of an hour. When I got back, my ring had disappeared."

"Your ring, sir!" cried Tod.

"Yes, my ring, sir," mocked the Pater; for he thought we were taking up the matter lightly, and it nettled him. "I left it on the seal, expecting to find it there when I returned. Not so. The ring had gone, and the letter lay on the ground. We have got a thief about the house, boys—a thief—within or without. Just the same sort of thief, as it seems to me, that you had at school."

Tod suddenly leaned forward, his elbow on his knee, his whole interest aroused. Some unpleasant doubt had struck him, as was evident by the flush upon his face.

"Of course, anybody that might be about, back or front, could find their way down here if they pleased," he slowly said. "Tramps get in sometimes."

"Rarely, without being noticed. Who did you boys see about the place that afternoon—tramp or gentleman? Come! You were at the house, Johnny: you bolted into it, headforemost, saying you had come from the Dyke."

"I never saw a soul but Sanker: he was on the bench on the lawn, reading. I said so at the time, sir."

"Ah! yes; Sanker was there reading," quietly assented the Squire. "What were you hastening home for, Johnny?"

As if that mattered, or could have had anything to do with it! He had a knack of asking unpleasant questions; and I looked at Tod.

"Hugh got his blouse torn, and Johnny came in to get another,"

acknowledged Tod, readily. The fact was, Hugh's clothes that afternoon had come to uncommon grief. Hannah had made one of her usual rows over it, and afterwards shown the things to Mrs. Todhetley.

"Well, and now for to-day," resumed the Pater. "Where have you all been?"

Where had we not? In the three-cornered paddock; with Monk in the pine-house; away in the rick-yard; once to the hay-field; at the rabbit-hutches; round at the stables; oh, everywhere.

"You two, and Sanker."

"Not Sanker," I said. Sanker stayed on the lawn with his book. We had all been on the lawn for the last half-hour: he, us, Hugh, Lena, and the magpie. But not a suspicious character of any sort had we seen about the place.

"Sanker's fond of reading on the lawn," remarked Mr. Todhetley, in a careless tone. But he got no answer: we had been struck into silence.

He took one hand out of his pocket, and drummed on the table, not looking at either of us. Tod had laid hold of a piece of blotting-paper and was pulling it to pieces. I wondered what they were thinking of: I know what I was.

"At any rate, the first thing is to find the ring; *that* only went this morning," said the Squire, as he left us. Tod sat on where he was, dropping the bits of paper.

"I say, Tod, do you think it *could* be ——?"

"Hold your tongue, Johnny!" he shouted. "No, I don't think it. The bank-note—light, flimsy thing—must have been lost in the yard, and the ring will turn up. It's somewhere on the floor here."

In five minutes the news had spread. Mr. Todhetley had told his wife, and summoned the servants to the search. Both losses were made known; consternation fell on the household; the women-servants searched the room; old Thomas bent his back double over the frame outside the glass doors. But there was no ring.

"This is just like the mysterious losses we had at school," exclaimed Sanker, as a lot of us were standing in the hall.

"Yes, *it is*," said the Squire.

"Perhaps, sir, your ring is in a corner of some odd pocket?" went on Sanker.

"Perhaps it may be," answered the Squire, rather emphatically; "but not in mine."

Happening to look at Mrs. Todhetley, I saw her face had turned to a white fright. Whether the remark of Sanker or the peculiarity of the Squire's manner brought to her mind the strange coincidence of the losses, here and at school, certain it was the doubt had dawned upon her. Later, when I and Tod were hunting in the room on our own account, she came to us with her terror-stricken face.

"Joseph, I see what you are thinking," she said; "but it can't be; it can't be. If the Sankers are poor, they are honest. I wish you knew his father and mother."

"I have not accused any one, Mrs. Todhetley."

"No; neither has your father; but you suspect."

"Perhaps we had better not talk of it," said Tod.

"Joseph, I think we must talk of it, and see what can be done. If— if he should have done such a thing, of course he cannot stay here."

"But we don't know that he has, therefore he ought not to be accused of it."

"Oh! Joseph, don't you see the pain? None of you can feel this as I do. He is my relative."

I felt so sorry for her. With the trouble in her pale, mild eyes, and the quivering of her thin, meek lips. It was quite evident that *she* feared the worst: and Tod threw away concealment with his step-mother.

"We must not accuse him; we must not let it be known that we suspect him," he said; "the matter here can be hushed up—got over—but were suspicion once directed to him on the score of the school losses, the disgrace would never be lived down, now or later. It would cling to him, a ban, through life."

Mrs. Todhetley clasped her slender and rather bony fingers, from which the wedding-ring looked always ready to drop off. "Joseph," she said, "you assume confidently that he has done it; I see that. Perhaps you know he has? Perhaps you have some proof that you are concealing?"

"No, on my honour. But for my father's laying stress on the curious coincidence of the disappearances at school I should not have thought of Sanker. 'Losses there; losses here,' he said——"

"Now then, Peter!" mocked the bird, from his perch on the old tree.

"Be quiet!" shouted Tod. "And then the Squire went on adroitly to the fact, without putting it into words, that nobody else seems to have been within hail of this room either time."

"He has had so few advantages; he is kept so short of money," murmured poor Mrs. Todhetley, seeking to find an excuse for him. "I would almost rather have found my boy Hugh—when he shall be old enough—guilty of such a thing, than Edward Sanker."

"I'd a great deal rather it had been me," I exclaimed. "I shouldn't have felt half so uncomfortable. And we are not *sure*. Can't we keep him here, after all? It will be an awful thing to turn him out—a thief."

"He is not going to be turned out, a thief. Don't put in your oar, Johnny. The Pater intends to hush it up. Why! had he suspected any other living mortal about the place, except Sanker, he'd have accused them outright, and sent for old Jones in hot haste."

Mrs. Todhetley, holding her hand to her troubled face, looked at Tod as he spoke. "I am not sure, Joseph—I don't quite know whether to hush it up entirely will be for the best. If he—oh!"

The note of exclamation came out with a shriek. We turned at it, having been standing together at the table, our backs to the window. There stood Sanker. How long he had been there was uncertain; quite long enough to hear and comprehend. His face was livid with passion, his voice hoarse with it.

"Is it possible that I am accused of taking the bank-note and the ring?—of having been the thief at school? I thank you, Joseph Todhetley."

Mrs. Todhetley, always for peace, ran before him, and took his hands. Her gentle words were drowned—Tod's were overpowered. When quiet fellows like Sanker do get into a rage, it's something bad to witness.

"Look here, old fellow," said Tod, in a breath of silence; "we don't accuse you, and don't wish to accuse you. The things going here, as they did at school, is an unfortunate coincidence; you can't shut your eyes to it; but as to——"

"Why are *you* not accused?—why's Ludlow not accused?—you were both at school, as well as I; and you are both here," raved Sanker, panting like a wild animal. "You have money, both of you; you don't want helping on in life; I have only my good name. And that you would take from me!"

"Edward, Edward! we did not wish to accuse you; we said we would not accuse you," cried poor Mrs. Todhetley in her simplicity. But his voice broke in.

"No; you only suspected me. You assumed my guilt, and would not be honest enough to accuse me, lest I refuted it. Not another hour will I stay in this house. Come with me."

"Don't be foolish, Sanker! If we are wrong——"

"Be silent!" he cried, turning savagely on Tod. "I'm not strong; no match for you, or I would pound you to atoms! Let me go my own way now. You go yours."

Half dragging, half leading Mrs. Todhetley with him, the angry light in his eyes frightening her, he went to his bed-room. Taking off his jacket; turning his pockets inside out; emptying the contents of his trunk on the floor, he scattered the articles, one by one, with the view of showing that he had nothing concealed belonging to other people. Mrs. Todhetley, great in quiet emergencies, had her senses hopelessly scared away in this; she could only cry, and implore of him to be reasonable. He flung back his things, and in five minutes was gone. Dragging his box down the stairs by its stout cord, he managed to hoist it on his shoulders, and they saw him go fiercely off across the lawn.

I met him in the plantation, beyond the Dyke. Mrs. Todhetley,

awfully distressed, sent me flying away to find the Pater; she mistakenly thought he might be at Rimmell's, who lived in a cottage beyond it. Running home through the trees, I came upon Sanker. He was sitting on his box, crying; great big sobs bursting from him. Of course he could not carry *that* far. Down I sat by him, and put my hand on his.

"Don't, Sanker! don't, old fellow! Come back and have it cleared up. I dare say they are all wrong together."

His angry mood had changed. Those fierce whirlwinds of passion are generally followed by depression. He did not seem to care an atom for his sobs, or for me seeing them.

"It's the cruelest wrong I ever had dealt to me, Johnny. Why should they pitch upon *me*? What have they seen in me that they should set me down as a thief?—and such a thief! Why, the very thought of it, if they send her word, will kill my mother."

"You didn't do it, Sanker. I —."

He got up, and raised his hand solemnly to the blue sky, just as a man might have done.

"I swear I did not. I swear I never laid finger on a thing in your house, or at school, that was not mine. God hears me say it."

"And now you'll come back with me, Ned. The box will take no harm here till we send for it."

"Go back with you! that I never will. Fare you well, Johnny: I'll wish it to *you*."

"But where are you going?"

"That's my business. Look here; I was more generous than some of you have been. All along, I felt as *sure* who it was, cribbing those things at school, as though I had seen it done; but I never told. I just whispered to the fellow, when we were parting: 'Don't you go in for the same game next half, or I shall have you dropped upon;' and I don't think he will."

"Who—which was it?" I cried, eagerly.

"No: give him a chance. It was neither you nor me, and that's enough to know."

Hoisting the box upon to the projecting edge of a tree, he got it on his shoulders again. Certain of his innocence then, I was in an agony to get him back.

"It's of no use, Johnny. Good-bye."

"Sanker! Ned! The Squire will be fit to smother us all, when he finds you are off; Mrs. Todhetley is in dreadful grief. Such an unpleasant thing has never before happened with us."

"Good-bye," was all he repeated, marching resolutely off, with the black box held safe by the cord.

Fit to smother us? I thought the Pater would have done it, when he came home late in the afternoon; laying the blame of Sanker's going, first on Mrs. Todhetley, then on Tod, then on me.

"What is to be done?" he asked, looking at us all helplessly. "I'd not have had it come out for the world. Think of his parents—of his own prospects."

"He never did it, sir," I said, speaking up; "he swore it to me."

The Pater gave a sniff. "Swearing does not go for much in such cases, I'm afraid, Johnny."

It was so hopeless, the making them understand Sanker's solemn truth as he did swear it, that I held my tongue. I told Tod; also, what he had said about the fellow he suspected at school; but Tod only curled his lip, and quietly reminded me that I should never be anything but a muff.

Three or four days passed on. We could not learn where Sanker went to, or what had become of him; nothing about him except the fact that he had left his box at Goody Picker's cottage, asking her to take charge of it until it was sent for. Mrs. Todhetley would not write to Wales, or to the school, for fear of making mischief. I know this: it was altogether a disagreeable remembrance, whichever way we looked at it, but I was the only one who believed in his innocence.

On the Monday another loss occurred; not one of value in itself, but uncommonly significant. Since the explosion, Mrs. Todhetley had moved about the house restlessly, more like a fish out of water than a reasonable woman, following the Squire to his room, and staying there to talk with him, as she never had before. It was always in her head to do something to mend matters; but, what, she could not tell; hence her talkings with the Pater. As each day passed, bringing no news of Sanker, she grew more anxious and fidgety. While he was in his room on the Monday morning, she came in with her work. It was the unpicking some blue ribbons from a white body of Lena's. There had been a child's party at the Stirlings' (they were always giving them), and Lena had a new frock for it. The dressmaker had put a glistening glass thing, as big as a pea, in the bows that tied up the sleeves. They looked like a diamonds. The Pater made a fuss after we got home, saying it was inconsistent at the best; she was too young for real diamonds, and he would not have her wear mock rubbish. Well, Mrs. Todhetley had the frock in her hand, taking these bows off, when she came to the Squire on the Monday morning, chattering and lamenting. I saw and heard her. On going away she accidentally left one of them on the table. The Squire went about as usual, dodging in and out of the room at intervals like a dog in a fair. I sat on the low seat, on the other side of the hedge, in the vegetable garden, making a fishing-line and flinging stones at the magpie whenever he came up to his perch on the old tree's stump. All was still; nothing to be heard but his occasional croak, "Now then, Peter!" Presently I caught a soft low whistle behind me. Looking through the hedge, I saw Roger Monk coming out of the room with stealthy steps, and going off

towards his greenhouses. I thought nothing of it; it was his ordinary way of walking; but he must have come up to the room very quietly.

"Johnny," came the Squire's voice by-and-by, and I ran round: he had seen me sitting there.

"Johnny, have you a mind for a walk to——"

He had got thus far when Mrs. Todhetley came in by the inner door, and began looking on the table. Nothing in the world was on it except the inkstand, the "*Worcester Herald*," and the papers before the Squire.

"I must have left one of the blue knots here," she said.

"You did; I saw it," said the Squire; and he took up his papers one by one, and shook the newspaper.

"Well, the blue shoulder-knot was gone. Just as we had searched for the ring, we searched for that: under the matting, and above the matting, and everywhere; I and those two. A grim look came over the Squire's face.

"The thief is among us still. He has taken that glittering paste thing for a diamond. This clears Sanker."

Mrs. Todhetley burst into a storm of glad sobs. I had never seen her so excited; you might have thought her an hysterical girl. She would do all sorts of things at once; the least of which was, starting in a post-chaise-and-four for Wales.

"Do nothing," said the Squire, with authority. "I had news of Sanker this morning, and he's back at school. He wrote me a letter."

"Oh, why did you not show it me?" asked Mrs. Todhetley, through her tears.

"Because it's a trifle abusive; actionable, a lawyer might say," he answered, stopping a laugh. "Ah! ha! a big diamond! I'm as glad of this as if anybody had left me a thousand pounds," continued the good old Pater. "I've not had that boy out of my head since, night or day. We'll have him back to finish his holidays—eh, Johnny?"

Whether I went along on my head or my tail, doing the Squire's errand, I didn't exactly know. To my mind the thief stood disclosed—Roger Monk. But I did not much like to betray him to the Squire. As a compromise between duty and disinclination, I told Tod. He went straight off to the Squire, and Roger Monk was ordered to the room.

He did not take the accusation as Sanker took it—noisily. About as cool and hardy as any fellow could be, stood he; a white sheet of angry retaliation shining from his sullen face. And, for once, he looked full at the Squire as he spoke.

"This is the second time I have been accused wrongfully by you or yours, sir. You must prove your words. A bank-note, a ring, a false diamond (taken to be a true one), in a blue ribbon; and I have stolen them. If you don't either prove your charge to be true, or withdraw

the imputation, the law shall make you, Mr. Todhetley. I am down in the world, obliged to take a common situation for a while; but that's no reason why I should be browbeat and put upon."

Somehow, the words, or the manner, told upon the Squire. He was not feeling sure of his grounds. Until then he had never cast a thought of ill on Roger Monk.

"What were you doing here, Monk? What made you come up stealthily, and creep stealthily away again?" demanded Tod, who had assumed the guilt out and out.

"As to what I was doing here, I came to ask a question about my work," coolly returned Monk. "I walked slowly, not stealthily; the day's hot."

"You had better turn out your pockets, Monk," said the Squire.

He did so at once, just as Sanker had done unbidden, biting his lips to get some colour into them. Lots of odds and ends of things were there; string, nails, a tobacco-pipe, halfpence, and such like; but no blue bow. I don't think the Squire knew whether to let him off as innocent, or to give him into custody as guilty. At any rate, he seemed to be in hesitation, when who should appear on the scene but Goody Picker. The turned-out pockets, Monk's aspect, and the few words she caught, told the tale.

"If you please, Squire—if you please, young masters," she began, dropping a curtsy to us in succession; "the mistress told me to come round here. Stepping up this morning about a job o' work I'm doing for Mrs. Hannah, I heard of the losses that have took place, apperiently thefts. So I up and spoke; and Hannah took me to the mistress; and the mistress, who had got her gownd off a-changing of it, listened to what I had to say, and telled me to come round at once to Mr. Todhetley. (Don't you be frightened, Monk.) Sir, young gentlemen, I think it might have been the magpie."

"Think who might have been the magpie?" asked the Squire, puzzled.

"What stole the things. Sir, that there pie, bought only t'other day from my gran'son by young Mr. Todhetley, was turned out o' my son Peter's home at Alcester for thieving. He took this, and he took that; he have been at it for weeks, ever since they'd had him. They thought it was the servant, and sent her away. (A dirty young drab she was, so 'twere no loss.) Not her, though; it were that beast of a magpie. A whole nest of goods he had got hid away in the brewhouse: but for having a brewing on, he might never ha' been found out. The woman was drawing off her second mash when she see him hop in with a new shirt wristban' and drop it into the old iron pot."

Tod, who believed the story to be utterly unreasonable—got up, perhaps, by Mother Picker to screen the real thief—resented the imputation on his magpie. The bird came hopping up to us, "Now, then, Peter."

"That's rather too good, Mrs. Picker, that is. I have heard of lodging-house cats effecting wonders in the way of domestic disappearances, but not of magpies. Look at him, poor, old fellow! He can't speak to defend himself."

"Yes, look at him, sir," repeated Mother Picker; "and a fine object of a half-fed animal he is, to look at! My opinion is, he have got something wrong o' the inside of him, or else it's his sins that troubles his skin, for the more he's give to eat the thinner he gets. No feathers, no flesh; nothing but a big beak, and them bright eyes, and the deuce's own tongue for impudence. Which is begging pard'n for speaking up free," concluded Mother Picker, as Mrs. Todhetley came in, fastening her waistband.

A little searching, not a tithe of what had been before again and again, and the creature's nest was discovered. In a cavity of the old tree stump, so conveniently opposite, lay the articles: the bank-note, the ring, the blue bow, and some other things, most of which had not been missed. One was a bank receipt, that the house had been hunted for high and low.

"Now, then, Peter!" cried the magpie, hopping about on the gravel as he watched the raid on his treasures.

"He must be killed to-day, Joe," said Mr. Todhetley; "he has made mischief enough. I never took kindly to him. Monk, I am sorry for the mistake I was led into; but we suspected others before you—ay, and accused them."

"Don't mention it, sir," replied Monk, his eye catching mine. And if ever I saw revenge written in a face, it was in his as he turned away.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



## AUNT FÉLICITÉ.

A NORMAN STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CHARLOTTE BURNEY," &c.

MADemoiselle TRUDIN turned fiercely on her mother as she came heavily down the bare, wooden stairs.

"See what thy delay has caused. Is it right, is it convenable, I ask thee, that a young creature like Geneviève should be seen in public alone with Monsieur Seton? Ciel! it is too insupportable."

"Chut! they have got Elodie." Madame Trudin was not nearly so much in awe of Félicité's anger as of the calm, cold, sarcastic mood by which she usually governed.

Her daughter shrugged her shoulders.

"Thou must go down and fetch her back. I will go with thee. Wilt thou have a shawl?"

Madame Trudin looked surprised.

"But I am not going; they will be back directly. I have seen plenty of crabs; why should not Geneviève see them also?"

Félicité tapped impatiently on the floor with the heel of her yellow boot.

"Dost thou not understand?—thou art mocking me. Thou canst not have forgotten all I told thee. Art not thou scandalised that Geneviève should be so indiscreet as to walk about alone with a gentleman?"

"Ma foi!" said the bonne-maman, with a hearty laugh; "I should like to see them; they would look a very pretty pair. Tiens—tiens—I forgot, my child; but if he is thy prétendu, he will be the child's uncle, thou knowest; so it is well he should learn to take care of her."

Félicité's heart swelled, and the tears came in her eyes. It seemed to her that her place in her mother's heart was filled; that Madame Trudin cared nothing for her future happiness in comparison with Geneviève.

She said this with a proud bitterness that roused her mother to perceive that something unusual was stirring within her.

"I have grieved thee, my child," she said, penitently; "but then, my Félicité, thou hast not been quite open with thy old mother. Tell me, has this Monsieur Seton made his proposal, or has he come here to-day to make it to me?"

"That is what I expect." Félicité blushed till she looked almost ten years younger.

"I am glad ; thou knowest thou art sure of my consent, and my blessing, with whoever thou mayest choose ; for thou hast been always good and dutiful, only I did not think thou wouldst have taken so young and so grand a husband."

These were delicious words to listen to. When anything seems too good to be true, to a heart made incredulous by disappointment, how hungrily it listens to its own hopes on the lips of others ! But Félicité roused herself to remember Geneviève.

"I think we had better look for them," she said, in a gentler tone. "Now Geneviève has grown out of childhood, thou dost not wish her to be much on the Plage when Dives is so full of company."

"Bon ! thou mayest get me a shawl."

But before they reached the sea, they saw the trio returning, Elodie in front, holding a great crab by a piece of stick, to which a smaller one also clung.

Seton was stooping over Geneviève, whose face was bent down, as if to avoid his gaze.

Félicité hurried towards them. The sight struck her with the force of a blow.

"Grandmamma has come to bid you good night, Geneviève. It is time you took her home," she said, aside, to Elodie.

"Hein," said that old woman, protruding her chin, and bending her brows, "that's as Mademoiselle Geneviève pleases. I can wait as long as ever she likes—Oh, you nasty, greedy brute ! do you want to eat the old woman's finger as well as the stick—a poor little finger that has done you no harm ?" This to the crab.

Félicité looked keenly at her mother.

"Geneviève, it is best to say 'Bon soir' now, ma bonne petite. Petit bijou !" the old lady murmured, as she kissed the girl's forehead.

Seton was about to propose escorting her home, but a glance at Félicité checked him. She met his eyes as they left Geneviève's, but she did not know how fully her own revealed the expression she had detected. She saw his glance droop, and she thought it was with shame at the double part he had been playing. If she could have read his heart then, all might have been well. He was literally startled by the blaze of sudden jealousy that one look showed him. It seemed to him dangerous to expose Geneviève to its influence, and he bade her good-bye so calmly and willingly, that the girl's heart again swelled with sorrow. Had no one courage to take her part against Aunt Félicité ?

"Ah, ciel !" said the conscience-stricken child, as she turned sadly away towards Nourrenne, "each time I have seen her to-day, I have felt full of bad and wicked thoughts. What would Father Aloysius say to me ? Surely I am possessed by an evil spirit. Well, when

I get back to Nourrenne I shall be myself again ; and yet I have found these three days so triste. I have been wishing—oh, what have I not been wishing !” She clasped her hands over her burning face, to stifle the answer she felt there. Something told her that the grasp now laid on her heart would never loosen ; that henceforth the longing unrest which so disquieted her would form a part of her being.

A cloud fell on her as the conviction mastered her. For refuge she fled to remembering the words of loving admiration and sympathy she had listened to on the Plage. Could they really have been spoken to her by this English Monsieur, who seemed, to the secluded, unsophisticated girl, a demigod rather than an ordinary mortal ?

Mr. Seton only reappeared once at Dives during the remainder of Félicité’s visit. He had made himself very agreeable both to mother and daughter after Geneviève’s departure, but he did not ask Madame to grant him a private interview.

Félicité grew timid and irritable. She had told Seton she should spend a week with her mother, and so she stayed on—or else she was eager to get back to St. Roque—to her piano, she said to herself, but really to the contemplation of the back windows of the Hotel de Paris.

The last day came, and in the evening came Mr. Seton.

Before he spoke, Félicité read in his eyes that he had not expected to see her at Dives ; and she resolved to stay and find out what was the real purpose of his visit.

He was pleasant and cheerful ; but all his emprossement of manner towards her had vanished, and every now and then he was seemingly lost in thought.

“When do you return to St. Roque, mademoiselle ?” he said, as he bade them good evening. “I looked for you at your window, last night.”

Félicité started ; but she recovered herself before she spoke.

“I return there to-morrow ; but I did not know you were at St. Roque. The day we travelled down to Dives together, you said you were going to Dol and Coutances.”

She sighed involuntarily, for the remembrance of his words and looks on that day was too fresh not to be painful. Could it be possible that that few minutes on the Plage with Geneviève had undone all ?

When he was gone she took herself to task.

She had been morbid and fanciful in thinking his manner changed ; he was probably constrained before her mother, and would be all right when she again was at St. Roque. Félicité’s notions of les convenances gave her a restless night. It would not be proper for her to receive Mr. Seton alone ; scarcely, perhaps, to talk with him from her window. The only way would be to ask Madame Leroux to bring her needlework out into the yard below, and act as chaperon.

Two more days passed. The old life had begun again for Félicité in the Rue Puits d'Amour. But it was no longer dull. She seemed to dream through all the morning—to walk through it, as it were, on the tiptoe of expectation for what evening might bring. Hope grew so strong, that it bore her safely over the pits disappointment had dug in her way. Mr. Seton had appeared once at his window, and then he had only exchanged a few indifferent words; but still she told herself to be strong and patient. Why had he asked about her going back to St. Roque, if he had not wished for her?

On the fourth morning after her return—market-day—she found it necessary to go out to purchase some soup-herbs; she had exhausted the supply brought from Dives. Félicité disliked marketing. She was dignified, but she was not genial; and she hated to be addressed as “*ma jolie mam'selle*,” and “*ma petite dame*,” by the sturdy fruit and vegetable sellers; but to-day there was no Geneviève to send in her place.

She had bought her herbs and onions, and some French beans, and she stood waiting while these were shred up, ready for cooking. Two women came near her, talking so earnestly, that their words sounded out of the universal din.

“Chut! I say nothing; it might reach *la tante's* ears, and then my sweet angel would be taken away from me for ever. *Ahi!*”

The last sound was one of terror. Félicité had recognized the speaker's voice, but she stood still, without turning her head. She guessed that Elodie had seen her; but she knew it would be worse than useless to attempt to force from her any explanation of her words.

Quietly and collectedly she made her way out of the market, without once turning her head in the direction of the flower-stall, and then she began to think—to piece facts together, until suspicions and certainty had grown into a picture that made her tremble with suppressed passion.

There was but one way open to her; her eyes must tell her at once the true meaning of Elodie's words.

The clock was striking ten. The old woman would be safe in the market for two hours longer; or even if she had seen her, and hurried home, reckless of profits for that day, Madlle. Trudin would reach Nourrenne by the omnibus long before Elodie's donkey-cart got there; that is to say, if she arrived at the starting-place in time.

Ah! there was the doubt. Nourrenne was six miles off; and yet, though Félicité was not a better walker than Frenchwomen of her class generally are, she decided, by the time she reached the little Place, to set off on foot if she were too late for the omnibus.

But she was not doomed to such a penance. She turned the angle of the church, and there stood the shabby little vehicle. She was only just in time. There was one passenger besides herself—a young abbé—but he was so deeply absorbed with his book that she might as well have been travelling alone.

She did not know her way to Nourrenne. She had asked the conductor to set her down at the nearest point to the little out-of-the-way fishing-village; after that, she must trust to chance to find a path to it; but Félicité was not timid or diffident of her own powers; what she willed, she almost always did; and when she was put down at a lonely point, where three roads met, she set forth on that shown her without hesitation. At first the road, on either side, was bordered by hawthorn hedges and grassy banks, shaded by the tall trees growing up behind them. Here and there appeared the roof of a high-pitched château, through its formal avenue of poplar trees; but these were few. Green orchards, laden with sunny-coloured fruit, showed through the hedge gaps, the barley or wheat harvest ready for the sickle beneath; but as the ground began to slope towards the sea, the soil grew looser and more uneven beneath Félicité's feet, and the orchards dwindled, till at length she found herself in a narrow dirty road, with waste ground on either side, overgrown with buckthorn and coarse herbage. Before her lay the glittering, opal-like sea, flashing unnumbered tints from its luminous expanse—not a curl of smoke, not a vestige of human habitation, to tell her that she was on the right track. She might be miles away from Nourrenne; and yet something—Félicité did not know what—the wonderful sixth sense, that comes to us all at times—warned her that she was near her quest.

She paused to think; she knew that the whole village of Nourrenne was made up of five or six cabins; Elodie's must be more inland than the rest, because of her garden. Could the cabins be down on the Plage itself, behind the cliffs, which, as the road descended rapidly, seemed to rise all at once a short distance before her, the path being channelled through them?

She was through the narrow cliff now, and before her lay the broad glittering sea: it was ebb-tide, and the rocks showed out in long black reefs: close beside them were the fishermen's cottages.

Félicité's heart gave a bound of relief and self-gratulation; her judgment never deceived her. In another moment her terrible doubt would be solved; the suspicion which as yet she had realized only as a dim phantom, that the man she looked on as her own lover had met Geneviève in secret at Nourrenne.

Far away along the shining sand the base of the cliff has crumbled away, and, overlapped by the upper portion, which is still firm and solid, forms a wide-mouthed cave, carpeted with shells and seaweed, and fringed overhead with long coarse grass.

A soft murmur comes from within the cave; it is the softest, sweetest moment of young Love's life—a maiden brought to confession, compelled to own in bashful, half-uttered words, as Geneviève owns now—that she loves!

She was seated in the cave beside Seton; his arms were round her, and her face was hidden on his shoulder.

"Say it again," he murmured; "I can never hear it often enough, my darling, my precious Geneviève; I cannot believe it yet, that this little heart is all my own for ever!"

He hung over her in an intoxication of delight and triumph. This was his fourth visit to Nourrenne, but, spite of her love, the girl's timidity had till now prevented him from owning his passion.

They sat still, neither of them willing to break that delicious silence of first happiness: such moments should be marked with white stones in all our hearts; they never come twice to man or woman.

Seton was the first to speak.

"Look at me, my darling, for you are mine now. Ah! how happy I will make you when you are my own dear little wife. If I ever cause you a moment's pain, it will be the bitterest memory of my life. Look at me, sweet one; let me see in your own dear eyes that you believe me."

She raised them to his, liquid with unutterable tenderness. How little either dreamed of a watcher! There came a slight cry of anguish, and then they started asunder, to see Félicité standing beside them.

Seton was on his feet in a moment. He grasped Madlle. Trudin's hand in both of his.

"I am alone to blame for this," he said; "your niece knew nothing of my love till now. I am glad you are here: you will be, will you not, a valuable ally and friend with your mother?"

Félicité withdrew her hand.

"Does my mother know nothing, then, of this?"

She spoke involuntarily, and she repented her words, for she knew the encouragement they would convey to Geneviève.

Geneviève—whom she dared not look at—was suddenly transformed from a child into a bold, intriguing girl—the ruin of her hopes.

It seemed to Félicité as if hell were let loose in her bosom, and that unless she kept the tightest rein on her outward bearing, she must do some desperate act to slake the fire that was consuming her.

Her strong will helped her to be calm in speaking to Seton. She did not hate him; he was merely a victim.

He answered her question in a confused, conscious manner that helped her self-control.

"I am not sure, Mademoiselle, whether your mother has received my letter. I was just telling Geneviève that I have written to Madame Trudin this morning to ask her permission to address her grand-daughter, and I intend to present myself for her reply this afternoon at Dives."

"I think, Monsieur, my mother will tell you you should have asked her permission before you presumed to address this—this—very young girl at all. In France, no woman, who has any regard for reputation, permits the slightest intercourse with an unauthorized suitor."

She looked at Geneviève, and the girl shrank trembling from the pitiless gaze, and burst into tears.

But Seton resumed his place beside her, and again clasped his arm fondly round her waist. He looked up haughtily at Félicité.

"Mademoiselle, will you permit me to say that I wish that point to be decided by your mother? It seems to me the best course open to us now, my Geneviève,"—he looked fondly into the sobbing girl's face,—*"is to go at once together to Dives, and ask your bonne maman's forgiveness. Do you not think so, Mademoiselle?"*

"I cannot imagine you need my advice at this hour, Monsieur; you could have had it before, if you had really wished for it. There is one point on which I must be firm—I speak as my mother's representative—Geneviève must go with me to Dives; I cannot lose sight of her again."

She had somewhat mastered her anger, but when she saw the girl shrink from her, and turn her imploring face to Seton, it burst out in spite of her.

"Have you no shame, unhappy one?" she said, fixing her piercing gaze on her. "Think of your pure, sainted mother; think what the honour of your father would feel at your misconduct."

Seton tried to speak. Félicité stopped him with a haughty gesture.

"Monsieur, I cannot listen: this is purely a family question between me and my niece. You can, of course, follow us to Dives; but I tell you that I will not quit Geneviève again until I leave her safe under my mother's care."

Madame Trudin was sitting in her garden-chair, reading Seton's letter.

She had her silver-mounted spectacles on; but still that English handwriting was very difficult to master. The t's were "so pagan and outlandish," Madame said. However, when she had aided her perceptions by two or three pinches of snuff, she had a very fair comprehension of Mr. Seton's intentions.

She smoothed the paper over with her dimpled hand, and gave a little sigh.

"Poor Félicité! she is disappointed. But, then, she has doubtless deceived herself. It is the way always with women of her age; and it is my sweet little darling, then, that this young milord Anglais demands so loftily for his wife. *Ma foi*, it is hard to yield her! But what will you? When one reaches the descending side of the wheel one must always give place to those who are mounting. Yes, Félicité and I must both think of the child now, not of ourselves; it is hard, but it is natural."

She wiped a little tear out of each eye, and then, when she looked up presently at the click of the gate, there were the three wayfarers from Nourrenne coming up the serpentine gray path towards her. Félicité in advance, her face full of stern sorrow; Seton close to her, flushed and eager to tell his own story; and, lagging far behind the others, poor pale Geneviève, feeling almost as if she wished the earth

would open and cover her. Before Aunt Félicité could tell the grand-mère how she had found her, Seton pressed forward, and before Félicité could interfere he and Madame Trudin were shaking hands as if they were old friends.

"Then you are not displeased with my note?" He felt eager to get some definite words out before the aunt could speak. Spite of himself, he had a secret dread of her influence over her mother.

"I think you are a robber!" The old lady looked very mischievous, for she saw his anxiety in his face, and had the innate love of teasing peculiar to some women, and to all feline animals. "A very naughty robber, to come and steal my bright child away, without any consideration of the loss to me. Ah, ça; but I must be told everything en règle, you know."

She smoothed down the backs of her black silk mittens, and looked as serious as she could. She had attired herself for this interview as for one of the state occasions of her life, and it had been real relief to see both her children with Seton. The responsibility would have been too solemn to undertake alone.

Félicité was standing beside Seton, quite as eager as he was, and far more resolute.

A cloud came over the face of Madame Trudin whilst her daughter spoke.

"Ma mère, will you listen to me for five minutes alone?"

The puzzled old woman looked from one to the other. She hated difficulties. All had seemed so clear and easy, and now was Félicité going to put obstacles in the way?

But Seton could be as determined as Félicité when he was fairly roused.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, I would not for the world intrude between you and your dear mother. I only ask one favour. That she will give me this dear little hand first, and accept me as her grandson?"

He drew Geneviève forward, but instead of standing hand in hand with him, she threw her arms round Madame Trudin's neck, and hid her face on her shoulder.

She only fled there for refuge and forgiveness, but the appeal was irresistible.

Her grandmother kissed her again and again, and whispered tender words of encouragement. Then she looked at Seton with a tearful earnestness that restrained even Félicité's impatience.

"Monsieur," she said, with a slight reproach in her tone, "I do not know how you have won the child's affections; but it seems to me you have them. It is not for me to withhold her from you, if you have, as you say you have, the means of making her your wife; but remember how she has been loved, and do not take her from me unless she is always to be as dear to you as she is now."

Seton was entirely moved out of his easy indolence. He took Madame Trudin's hand, and then Geneviève's, and pressed them to his lips. He turned to Félicité to claim her consent also; but Madlle. Trudin had gone in-doors.

Seton knew very well that all his delicious *têtes-à-tête* with Geneviève were over, and hard as it was to leave her, now that he could really feel she was his own, after a few explanations, and some very satisfactory talk with her grandmother, he returned to St. Roque. He felt a strange unwillingness to leave Félicité behind him, but he should come back next day to Dives, and surely Geneviève must be safe in her grandmother's loving care.

Meantime Félicité had shut herself up in her own room, not to give vent to the fury of jealous rage that laboured within her, but to devise how this folly, as she considered it, might best be stopped.

If Madame Trudin could be persuaded to retract her consent, she was not afraid that any girl, so well trained and principled as Geneviève, would commit the unpardonable sin of marrying against the consent of her parents; but the difficulty she saw before her lay in her mother's own inclination to permit the marriage.

She walked up and down the room for more than an hour, but still no valid objection presented itself. His double-dealing towards herself—bah! A bitter smile crossed her stern face. Her mother had no place left in her heart for her now! Had she not actually turned her back on her remonstrances, to listen to Seton?

Geneviève had robbed her of all. Geneviève—for whom she had worked so unflinchingly—who owed to her every charm and grace by which she had ensnared Seton! The fierce passion would not be stayed; it glittered in her eyes, and sounded in her hard, deep breathing.

"Oh, ciel!" she murmured. "How I hate her; if I were not a good woman, I should kill her."

This outburst brought back her self-control. She knew herself to be good, and pious, and wise; she ought not to allow her mother, whose faculties were clouded by age, to decide for herself in this matter.

These young marriages were never successful; could she forget her brother's sorrowful fate; had he not himself asked her in his last illness not to let his infant child die as her mother had died, broken-hearted. What did any of them know of this Mr. Seton; he might take the child away to England; who could say that he had not already a wife there?

She sate thinking on, till, as the rays of sunshine faded from off the vine-leaves clustering round her casement, a gleam of sudden light flashed within her; she shrank, with abhorrence and shame, from the suggestion, but she did not resolutely turn away and refuse to listen to it, and the suggestion had soon become a purpose, only waiting opportunity.

She had not joined the mid-day meal; but now that thought was no longer at work, she could feel hungry, and she went into the little *salle*.

Everything had smoothed itself to the success of her purpose; Geneviève had gone to lie down, and Madame Trudin was alone.

She looked disturbed when her daughter came in; but before their conference ended, there came upon her bright genial face an expression of sorrow and self-reproach which rarely left it again.

Madame Trudin was seated in the garden with her lap full of endive, and the great brass pan of water beside her. She had asked Mr. Seton to make his second déjeuner at Dives, and she ought to be getting the salad ready, but she made little progress; her hands trembled so, that she was glad when Marie came and took it all away into the kitchen; she had nothing now to distract her attention from unhappy Geneviève.

The poor girl had been weeping bitterly, but silently, for a long, long time, resisting all her grandmother's efforts at consolation. Now she sat up and pushed the hair away from her face.

"Bonne maman! this is not your own thought, these are not your own words that you have been speaking—Aunt Félicité has put them all into your head. I do not love her, she has never loved me, and now she is trying to prevent my happiness."

"Hush, my child; you are unjust. Have I, then, no judgment of my own? All that I say is, that Mr. Seton is a heretic and a stranger. I am content not to make an obstacle of the first, though I am not sure that it is not a sin so to do; but for the last I say this—he is handsome, and he is pleasing, and my Geneviève loves him. Bon, these are all good reasons for my having said yes to his pretensions."

"And you did say yes, grandmaman; you cannot unsay that consent."

Madame Trudin looked conscience-struck, but she looked angry too.

"You are unreasonable, petite. I am not one to blow hot and cold. I say this: let Mr. Seton go away now and prove himself faithful for a year or so; then if he comes back and claims you, there shall be no more obstacles; but I think you have both been foolish and imprudent, and this little trial will be good for you."

It was difficult to believe that it was Madame Trudin who spoke, so much of her daughter's stiff, hard tone sounded in her words.

The young girl felt this, and felt too, how useless it was to appeal against them; she clenched her hands tightly together, and sat silent.

Presently a new look of determination came into her sad face.

"Grandmamma, I have given my promise; if Arthur claims me, I must marry him."

The old woman was surprised.

"Geneviève, you know what the law says about consent of parents—that of itself ought to be enough for any right-minded girl; but have you so soon forgotten all I told you about your mother? It is true, I did not at first see her fault so seriously as—as others did, because if she disobeyed and offended her high-born parents, it was to marry my

only son ; but the curse remained for all that. From the time of your father's marriage, nothing prospered with him ; and your mother's last words were to accuse herself of his misfortunes, and the blight she had brought on us all. Will you tempt her fate again, Geneviève ? Will you reward Mr. Seton's love by bringing down a curse on his head ?—for a curse must follow a disobedient child, though its parents may never utter it."

Geneviève had not forgotten the pitiful history, though she trembled now as her grandmother repeated it ; the remembrance of Elodie's sad pictures of her young father and mother dying of want and sorrow, before Mademoiselle Trudin came to the rescue of their child—too late to save the parents—had caused her bitter weeping. She knew she could not marry Seton unless her grandmother consented ; but she had not believed that Madame Trudin could resist her pleading.

Presently she saw Seton coming up the garden. Instead of going to meet him, she stole into the house.

He saw the movement, and a shadow came over his joyful anticipations ; a few minutes more, and he saw the old lady's sorrowful face ; then he grew anxious and impatient.

"But you must sit down ; I have a proposal to offer to you." She fidgeted her mittens as she spoke. "Yes, yes—you shall marry Geneviève—have I not said so yesterday ? But listen, my friend, the child is young ; you must wait two years."

He started up, and exclaimed against her words. But she went on doggedly.

"She is young ; and there are other reasons too—grave reasons, Monsieur, to a parent. You are a foreigner, Monsieur Seton—a heretic, perhaps"—she crossed herself ; "and you may change your mind. But listen ;" he was pacing the walk in front of her in a tempest of indignation ; "you shall have liberty to write to Geneviève ; you shall see her, provided that you respect les convenances, and that my daughter is present at your meetings ; for it is better for the child to go back at once to St. Roque."—She hurried on here, as if she were afraid he would not listen.—"At the end of two years, if you still wish to make Geneviève your wife, you shall have her ; but, Monsieur Seton, it is possible you will have changed before the end of two years."

Mr. Seton was very angry ; he stormed and reproached the old lady ; but he did not turn her from her resolution. Then he insisted on seeing Geneviève alone ; but this, it appeared, could not be tolerated.

"I must see her at all events, Madame," he said, savagely, "if I stay here till dark."

Madame bowed. She had a confused, downcast look, which puzzled the young Englishman. He wondered Félicité did not appear to support her mother.

"You shall, see the child, Monsieur : she is more reasonable than you are. I entreat you not to sow discord between her and me."

Geneviève came down stairs very pale and quiet : the great red rings round her eyes told him how deeply she had suffered, and yet he felt angry with her for the meek look of patience on her sad face.

He led her away to the window, and the soft-hearted grandmother plunged both her hands and as much of her face as possible into her huge knitting-basket, which stood on the little buffet near the door.

"Geneviève, my own darling, what is this that has come between us? It is not you who wish for this horrible separation?"

There was a look of uneasiness and doubt in his eyes that filled hers with a quick gush of tears.

"Ah! no, no," she said; "you have made life such a new, happy thing to me, that I dare not think what it will be when you go away."

Then she laid her face on his shoulder to hide her blushes.

He pressed her very closely to him, and bent down his head to whisper—

"You are your own mistress, my darling; you have no parents to obey; be my wife at once, and we will go to England together."

She loved him very dearly, and yet the proposal repelled her, apart from its actual meaning. It seemed as if she must have said or done something to make him think her unwomanly.

She shook her head, without answering.

"You do not love me; you cannot understand my love for you, Geneviève, or you could not think of idle scruples, when our whole future happiness is in question."

Geneviève looked up into his eyes; and Seton, angry and thwarted as he felt, could no longer doubt her love. By degrees she quieted him, and got him to listen to the story of her mother's disobedience.

"You are too pure and good for me," he whispered, when she ceased speaking, and Geneviève felt his tears on her forehead; but his mood soon altered: he knew Félicité had caused the change in her mother, and he was determined to acquaint her with his knowledge. But, face to face, he was no match for Félicité. He lost his patience, while she listened with perfect smiling calmness. She could be gentle both with him and Geneviève now; but she never took her eyes off them when they met in her presence.

They met twice a-week in the dingy little parlour in the Rue Puits d'Amour, and there sate Félicité, gentle, watchful, silent. How could they talk freely in her presence? Seton tried vainly to meet Geneviève by stealth, but her aunt never sent her out alone now: she was not unkind, but she was not to be taken unawares.

To be thus conquered and kept in subjection was too much.

"I cannot stand this," Seton whispered to Geneviève at his fourth visit. "Surely if you tried, you could meet me out of doors?"

"I cannot—indeed, I cannot. I am never alone now. I grieve most for you; for me, if I see you only, I am content; but I know you are unhappy."

He tried, for her sake, to bear the restraint, but he could not ; he had never had to study any one but himself, and the struggle was hard.

They met once more, and then he told Geneviève he should be better away from St. Roque.

"We can write to each other far more freely than we can speak, my darling," he whispered.

Seton went away ; he never dreamed of the anguish the brave little heart hid from him when he bade her good-bye.

Before he went, he told Madame Trudin that he did not wish Geneviève's professional education to be continued. "She sings quite well enough to please me," he said ; and the sight of her niece was now so painful to Félicité that she was glad to send her to Dives.

Seton had promised Geneviève to return at the year's end and claim her.

The time came, and found him pledged to spend some months in Italy with a brother-artist. It would be very provoking to go all the way to Normandy only to find the old grandmother as obstinate as ever ; but still he must keep his promise.

He wrote to Geneviève, and asked her to tell him frankly whether she could give him any definite hope of success if he came.

But Geneviève could not do this. She spoke to her grandmother, but Madame Trudin would not listen. The girl had lived on from month to month in the hope of seeing Seton ; his letters grew fewer and shorter as time went on ; "but when he comes all will be well," the poor child said to herself. And now what could she do ? Even for the joy of seeing him, she must not deceive him by a false hope, and once more she strove to be courageous and put a mask on her own deep, consuming love.

Women act thus from high, unselfish motives, and, doubtless, they are rewarded. Seton's letter showed Geneviève plainly that he shrank from coming to Normandy unless she could meet him as his wife. Ardently as she longed for his presence, her own love was too deep and fervent to need any spur, and it did not occur to her to doubt Seton's constancy ; circumstances might have delayed his writing. When he was in Italy he would have fewer distractions, and his letters would be again fond and passionate.

Her answer relieved Seton. It would have upset all his plans to make a détour to Normandy ; but he was mortified that Geneviève did not urge him to go to her ; it seemed to him that, after all, Madame Trudin had been right, and that they had both been young and precipitate. He put the tender, self-denying letter into his pocket, and began to think whether a long engagement was not a very foolish thing. He should not, at any rate, be in a hurry to write again to Geneviève. And then he went abroad, and month after month passed by, and still he did not answer the tender letter. It was partly forgetfulness, and partly a sort of shame, now that the sudden love-fit was over, for the

folly it had led him to commit. He had seen many lovely faces since he parted from Geneviève, faces ready to smile on him, and although he had not forgotten the sweet French girl, still her image had grown indistinct; its fresh charm had departed.

Arthur Seton was drawing in the Sciarra Palace one morning about six months after his arrival in Italy; he was in high spirits, triumphant at his own success, and the progress he was making in his profession; a sudden—

"Here you are at last, old fellow!" made him start and turn round.

A thin, dark man, with a face something between Don Quixote and Charles the First, was holding out his hand to him.

"I say, Seton, I've been hunting you up all the morning. Do come along into the sunshine. I've such lots of news for you. I called at your place before I came away, and I've brought you such a heap of letters."

"Bills, perhaps, for I have not many correspondents."

"Well, it's all the same. I'm not sure that it isn't easier to me to pay a bill than to answer a letter; in fact, it's a thing I never do. If people will write to me, they must take the consequences."

"But you see I have not a rich baronet for my uncle, so I prefer answering my letters. Where are you staying?"

"Oh, I'm at the Hotel di Rocco. I want you to tell me of a better place, and I want you to tell me lots of things when you've read your letters."

Mr. Bladen would have done much better if he had asked his questions first. He installed Seton in a comfortable easy-chair, and then placed a little table before him, on which was a formidable-looking budget of letters.

One of them, bearing a foreign aspect and address, in a minute female handwriting, lay at the top of the packet. Seton glanced at it, and then, with a half-annoyed look, threw it on one side. He opened another; the contents seemed amusing, for he laughed with a heartiness unusual to him; then he looked at his companion. Mr. Bladen was at the window, at the further end of the balcony, intent on some scene in the street below.

Seton stretched out his hand, and opened and read the little letter.

It was very short, not quite a page long, but its effect on him was magical.

Still keeping it in his hand, he was beside his friend in an instant.

"Bladen, I am very sorry, but I must go. I must leave Rome to-night, if I can;" then he went on in a confused way about sudden news—illness—not a moment to lose; and before his friend had recovered from his surprise, was down-stairs, and halfway to his own lodgings.

Till he was safe on his way to Leghorn, he did not again read the

letter which had caused his sudden journey; then he opened it, and read it slowly through:—

“MY OWN WELL-LOVED ARTHUR,—I wrote to you three months ago, but you have not answered me. It is possible, it seems to me, that my letter has never reached you. You asked me to tell you then whether grandmamma had changed her resolution about our marriage, and I fancied, perhaps without cause, that you did not care to come all this long way only to see Geneviève. It seemed to me you were braver than I, who had been so living on the hope of seeing you, and that I should be worthier of you if I could imitate your patience. Indeed, I have tried, my own Arthur, but they all say I am very ill. I think it is only the strong desire I have to see you; perhaps, if you could come, I might grow well. Is it very weak, very selfish, to ask you to let me look at you once more, to let me hear you call me again your own—

“GENEVIEVE.”

In the flap of the envelope were just these words:—

“If you mean to see her again, come at once.—TRUDIN, MARIGNY VEUVE.”

It is useless to tell the feverish impatience that possessed Seton. At first, as he read and re-read the little letter, his tears fell over it, and self-reproach made him moody and irritable. The letter was dated three months back. What might not have happened in that time? What a fool he had been, when he at length settled himself in Rome, to put off, day after day, writing home for his letters. But as he drew nearer Normandy, and, growing tired of his long, fatiguing journey, had leisure to reflect on the grievous interruption it must prove to his studies and success, he began to see that he had been hasty in acting on what he now called impulse. Geneviève was only a child—this pining might be a mere freak—women never died for love except in books—she might be well and strong again by this time—what did he know?—she had, perhaps, forgotten him altogether. Though he said this to himself, he did not believe it. A silent, brooding discontent hung over him; it would have been better to have written and inquired for Geneviève before he left Rome. He had determined to break off his engagement; why had he exposed himself to what might prove an unpleasant meeting?

He got to St. Roque early in the afternoon of a bright day in March. The keen east wind greeted him at the corner of the streets in its own ungenial fashion, but Seton did not heed it. He reached the market-place around the old gray church. It was silent and empty, but the memory of Geneviève, as she had stood there in her fresh pure loveliness, beside the old Elodie, came back to him, and those bright days of delight on the sands at Nourrenne; and he had been ready to

fling away this treasure of love and beauty, and to go on his way contented not to see her again! How had he forgotten this brief delicious time? A sense of gladness stole over him. He was impatient to hold her to his heart, ready, even, to ask her forgiveness for his long neglect—a great concession, this last, from Arthur Seton.

The door of the dull house in the Puits d'Amour was opened by Félicité herself. Seton had no time to ask the question on his lips, for Madlle. Trudin had seized his hand, and held it between both of hers.

"Dieu merci! you are come!—it is of the mercy of the Holy Virgin to my pure, sainted child! But why have you not come before—why have you killed her with your delay?"

"Killed her!" Seton's face changed to such an awful whiteness that Félicité expected to see him fall at her feet; but he steadied himself against the wall of the narrow entrance-passage. "Is she very ill—let me see her at once," he said; "I must see her!"

There was a strange expression of mingled pity and contempt on Félicité's worn face, though her words had stunned him. Seton was struck with the haggard change; all colour and beauty had gone from her.

"You shall see her, Monsieur; but she is dearer to me than you are now, and I must prepare her for the sudden sight of you. Also, there is much to be told you; and perhaps you ought to know it before you meet. Was it my letter that made you come?" she said, abruptly.

"Your letter? No. She wrote to me."

"Geneviève! Oh! but that was months ago. Ah! if you had come then! Now it is too late—too late for all but repentance." She buried her face in her hands, and sobbed—hard, suppressed sobs, that brought no tears with them.

Seton was agitated and alarmed, but he could not take in the reality. Again he moved to go up-stairs.

"Wait!" Félicité placed herself between him and the door of the little room. "You have caused others suffering enough by waiting for your slow coming; can you not even make the atonement of a little patience, while I tell you what must be told you about her, who is too pure, too near heaven, for either of *us* to look at?"

Her first words had been bitter, but as she spoke of Geneviève her voice changed into a despairing sadness, that brought tears to Seton's eyes.

"Heaven knows, I have no right to reproach you, Monsieur; you have sinned, but not as I have. You did not sit down and plan deliberately how best to destroy Geneviève's happiness, just because it clashed with your own vanity. I did! Listen!" (for she saw his attention was wandering, in his eagerness to go up-stairs.) "I loved you, as only vehement natures can love, and I believed that you were throwing yourself away on Geneviève. I did all I could to keep her from you; and when I found this useless, then I resolved that your marriage should

never be. I thought Geneviève had no depth of feeling—God forgive me! I judged that she would forget long before you would.”

Seton groaned.

“My only hope lay in making my mother insist on a long engagement. Even now I tell you, I am so little humbled that I scarcely believe in my own wickedness. I tried many ways; but my mother would not listen. Then I said, ‘I have worked and slaved all my life, and been always a sacrifice to others. Look at me, my mother! You know I always keep my word. I am resolved that this Englishman shall not marry the child, and if you persist in thwarting me, you must live on the small income you have; I can work no longer for you, and I will not!’ Monsieur, I knew my mother when I said this. She is good; but she loves herself too, and all the little comforts of her life are more to her than life itself. She cried, and strove hard to change my purpose; but I saw I should conquer if I persisted, and I did persist. You know what came after, and how I tried to make even your meetings a penance. You went away sooner than I expected. I have learned to set men’s natures at a lower rate since I knew you. Perhaps you thought, as I did, that Geneviève was so calm when you left her, that she did not feel much sorrow. How little we knew, either of us—we, who only thought of ourselves—of her who lived but for another. I watched her all that year. She grew paler and thinner daily, with a restless, feverish look in her bright eyes, but she did not droop actually till the year’s end; then she faded so fast that I knew what the struggle had been before. One day, Monsieur, the doctor told me she would die if her mind were not set at rest; that she was pining to death. In one moment, my heart told me that, if she died, I had killed her. I went to her, on my knees I told her all—my love and my sin—and she—she forgave me, without even one murmur. I asked her to write to you—and she wrote—though she said it was selfish to recall you against your will; but since the time when she could have had an answer to that last letter, she has sunk rapidly. You shrink from me, Monsieur Seton. I am not surprised. I have told you of my shame, as part of the punishment I must bear. You have sinned, too; but if it had not been for me, you would not have had the occasion. Now follow me, but do not come in till I summon you.”

The pale, overwrought woman, led the way up-stairs with the quiet, self-possessed manner he so well remembered. He could not think or feel; only the past filled his mental vision with mocking pictures of what might never be again.

“Come in, now, Monsieur,” said Félicité, from the inner room. Seton had been burning with impatience; now he hung back—he dared not face the dying girl.

But he heard his name softly spoken, and almost unconsciously he found himself beside her.

She lay on a sofa, changed far beyond any change he could have pictured. Lovely still, but with a beauty that seemed more of heaven than earth.

She smiled when she saw him, but her face grew troubled soon. He threw himself down beside her, and burst into an agony of grief, terrible to any beholder; enough—so it seemed to Madame Trudin—to kill her cherished darling.

"Hush!—hush, Monsieur! if you have so little control, you must leave us."

He had not seen the grand-mère at first, for she sat hidden behind Geneviève's sofa. Her voice checked him; but he could not altogether restrain himself.

"Ma tante!"—the loving trust in the sweet eyes seemed more than Félicité could bear, judging by her bowed head and trembling hands. "Thou wilt take bonne-maman away, wilt thou not? It is so long since Arthur and I have seen each other."

No one spoke in answer; but when he raised his head they were alone.

He had never practised self-control, and he could not learn it all at once. Kneeling beside her, holding her clasped in his arms, he poured out all his agony, all his self-reproach, in miserable broken sentences, mingled with sobs. More than once she tried to stop him, to soothe him with gentle, loving words; but he could not listen. Her wasted hand, as she laid it on his, only roused his grief to more intense bitterness. Her sudden pallor and half-closed eyelids warned him at last. In terror he called to Félicité to aid his efforts to restore her.

"Leave us now," he said, as Geneviève revived again. "I promise you to be careful." He made a mighty effort to stifle his sobs. He longed to hear her speak to him.

"You must not grieve so vehemently, dearest!" He had clasped his hand in both of hers, and now she drew it to her lips—"I am so happy in the joy of your presence, that it is hard to make me see that you do not rejoice in mine also."

He could not speak, but he clasped his arms yet more fondly round her.

"Arthur, my own darling, you must not sorrow over any of the past. I like you to know, and yet I cannot half tell you, how blessed it has all been to me. It has taught me so many things. I love you, oh, so much better than I should have loved you without it, and grand-mamma, and poor—poor Aunt Félicité. You must not sorrow over what has made me glad, my own." For he had buried his face on the cushion on which she lay, and she felt his tears on her cheek.

It was very hard to feel that he must smile into those dear eyes whose light would so soon leave him; that he must restrain the quivering agony of self-reproach, instead of pouring it out to her. But it

seemed to Seton as if he must obey her—as if the only atonement left for him was to submit himself implicitly to her slightest wish. . . .

What agony he suffered, day after day, as she faded gradually from earth, only those can realize who have watched beside such a parting spirit as Geneviève's. He bled inwardly, as daily some fibre of hope was wrenched away, and yet he did not dare to trouble, by earthly sorrow, the soul yearning for flight.

But it was only her presence that could thus subdue him. Often he left her room abruptly, and Félicité would find him stretched on the floor of the room below in an awfulness of despair that even she dared not cope with. Then she would send her mother, to soothe him like a child, and bring him back to Geneviève.

It was to Seton his hardest punishment that she never expressed a wish to live for him. One day, moved out of the restraint he had learned beside her, he told her this.

"And it is just and right, my darling. I could never have made you happy; and you feel this—"

Such a look of loving wonder came into her face.

"My Arthur, you would have made me so happy that I should have loved earth more than heaven. Think how happy you make me now." . . . .

And so she faded, with little of suffering, and to the last smiling in the three faces that strove to hide their anguish from her. . . .

And when all was ended, Seton went away.

It seems to him as if he has left years of life behind him at St. Roque. I cannot tell if the impression will be lasting. Will he go back into the world and forget, and grow as light-hearted as ever? or will he, like gray-haired, sorrow-stricken Aunt Félicité, carry for ever with him the memory of his grief, and the share he had in bringing it to pass?

Félicité still lives in the dull house in the Rue Puits d'Amour. She works harder than ever at her profession. But old Madame Trudini says, each time her daughter comes to Dives, that she grows more gentle and loving—more like her lost Geneviève.

KATHARINE S. MACQUOID.



## ON SOME NOTABLE DREAMS.

WHETHER we regard dreams as "the children of an idle brain, begot of nothing but vain fantasy," or accept them as an important integral part of the human constitution, they offer an interesting field of inquiry. Simply as stray shadows, flitting across the half-sleeping mind, they present an incongruous variety of peculiar incidents—tragic, pathetic, wonderful, ludicrous. Accepted as revelations of a higher state, lost or to come, regarded as the work of certain delicate machinery planted in the human brain by the Divine hand, they assume peculiar importance in many authenticated cases of dreams fulfilled. In sleep, with the muscles relaxed, the senses at rest, thought and voluntary motion in repose, the work of the organic functions goes on, the blood circulates, is purified by respiration, and, for the time being, (as Dr. Symonds puts it in an excellent little work, to which we are indebted for some of our instances of notable dreams in this paper) the body lives the life of a vegetable. But there are varied degrees of sleep. Some of our senses may be comparatively wakeful whilst others are in sound repose. In this state one organ may receive impressions that will excite activity of association in others more or less wakeful. It is this incomplete state of sleep, this semi-repose of the faculties, which produces dreams. Dr. Macnish, "happening to sleep in damp sheets, dreamed he was dragged through a stream." Dr. Symonds witnessed in his sleep what he thought was a prolonged storm of thunder, which he was afterwards able to trace to the light of a candle brought suddenly into the dark room where he had fallen asleep. He relates that a person having a blister applied to his head fancied he was scalped by a party of Indians. I remember, when a boy, sleeping in a strange house, in an old-fashioned room, with an oaken store-cupboard over the bed. I dreamt that I was being murdered; the assassin struck me on the head, and I awoke with a sense of pain in that region. Putting my hand to my forehead, I found it sticky—with blood! I felt almost too ill to cry for help, but at length I alarmed the household, and, on procuring a light, it was discovered that some fermented jam had leaked through the bottom of the cupboard and fallen upon my head in a small sluggish stream. A few months ago, shortly before going to bed, a friend had been discussing with me the peculiar instincts of animals, and, more particularly, their sense of the coming on of storms. After this he dreamed he was a Worcestershire short-horn, grazing in a pleasant meadow on the Hereford-

shire side of the Malvern Hills. He had a number of companions. Signs of a storm appeared in the sky, a misty vapour hung on the well-known beacon. He remembered distinctly, although he was a cow, watching, with a sense of great delight, the beauty of the preliminary tokens of the storm. With the other cows, he quietly strolled towards the shelter of an adjacent tree, and waited until the storm should break. He was chewing the cud, and he relished its herbaceous flavour. He distinctly remembered wagging his tail; yet all the time he had full reasoning faculties, and a lively sense of the beauties of the scenery. Dr. Macnish says, once his dreaming travelled so far into the regions of absurdity that he conceived himself to be riding upon his own back; one of the resemblances being mounted on another and both animated with a soul appertaining to himself, in such a manner that he knew not whether he was the carrier or the carried. These are odd examples of the incongruity of "the imperfection of the dreaming memory," which is most strongly illustrated when we dream of those who are dead. "We believe them still to be living, simply because we have forgotten that they are dead." A friend of Dr. Symonds dreamed that he was dead, and that he carried his own body in a coach to bury it. When he reached the place of burial a stranger said, "I would not advise you, sir, to bury your body in this place, for they are about to build so near it that I have no doubt the body will be disturbed by the builders." "That," replied the dreamer, "is very true; I thank you for the information, and I will remove it to another spot," upon which he awoke.

Of the prophetic character of dreams there are many strangely startling examples. Pepys relates the story "which Luellin did tell me the other day, of his wife upon her deathbed; how she dreamed of her uncle Scobell, and did foretell from some discourse she had with him that she should die four days thence, and no sooner, and did all along say so, and did so." In "Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Rochester, written by his own direction on his deathbed" (1680), his lordship related how Lady Ware's chaplain dreamed he should die the next day, went to bed in apparent perfect health, and died in the morning. In some "Various Examples" given by Mr. Frank Seafeld in his excellent work on "The Literature and Curiosities of Dreams," it is related that, "My Lady Seymour dreamed that she saw a nest with nine finches in it. And so many children she had by the Earl of Winchelsey, whose name was Finch." "Anno 1690, one in Ireland dreamed of a brother, or near relation of his, who lived at Amesbury, in Wiltshire, that he saw him riding on the downs, and that two thieves robbed him and murdered him. The dream awakened him; he fell asleep again, and had the like dream. He wrote to his relation on account of it, and described the thieves' complexion, stature, and clothes, and advised him to take care of himself. Not long after he had received the monitory letter he rode towards

Salisbury, and was robbed and murdered : and the murderers were discovered by his letter and executed." In 1698, Mr. William Smythies, curate of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, published an account of the robbery and murder of John Stockden, victualler, in Grub-street, and the discovery of the murderers, by several dreams of Elizabeth, the wife of Thomas Greenwood, a neighbour of the murdered man's. Jung Stilling, in "*Theorie der Geister-Kunde*," relates, that a short time before the Princess Nagotsky, of Warsaw, travelled to Paris (October 1720), she dreamed that she found herself in a strange apartment, where a man presented a cup to her, and desired her to drink. She declined, and the unknown person said, "You should not refuse ; this is the last you will ever drink in your life." In Paris she was taken ill, and the King's physician was sent to her. On his arrival, the Princess showed great signs of astonishment ; asked the reason, she said, "You perfectly resemble the man whom I saw in a dream at Warsaw ; but I shall not die this time, for this is not the same apartment which I saw in my dream." She recovered, and eventually, in good health, forgot her dream and the fears it had created. Upwards of a year afterwards, however, she was dissatisfied with her lodgings at the hotel, and requested to have apartments prepared for her in a convent at Paris. Immediately on entering the room, she exclaimed, "It is all over with me. I shall not leave this room alive ; it is the one I saw in my dream at Warsaw." She died soon afterwards, in the same apartment, of an ulcer in the throat, occasioned by the drawing of a tooth. In the "*Gentleman's Magazine*" for December, 1787, there is a wonderful account of the discovery of a murder through a dream. The narrative called forth a note from A. J., who said that some few years before the erection of those well-known lighthouses called the Caskets, near that island, an islander dreamed that a ship had been wrecked, and that some part of the crew had saved themselves upon the rocks. He told this story the next morning on the quay ; but the sailors, despite their superstitious characteristics, treated it as an idle dream. The next night he dreamed the same thing, and prevailing upon a companion to go out with him the next morning to the spot in a boat, they found three poor wretches there, and brought them ashore. Dr. Abercrombie says he is enabled to give the following anecdote as entirely authentic :—A lady dreamed that an aged female relative had been murdered by a black servant, and the dream occurred more than once. She was then so strangely impressed by it that she went to the house of the lady to whom it related, and prevailed upon a gentleman to watch in an adjoining room the following night. About three o'clock in the morning, the gentleman, hearing footsteps on the stairs, left his place of concealment, and met the servant carrying up a quantity of coals. Being questioned as to where he was going, he replied, in a confused manner, that he was going to mend his mistress's fire, which, at three o'clock in the morning,

in the middle of summer, was evidently impossible; and, on further investigation, a strong knife was found concealed beneath the coals. "Another lady," he says, "dreamed that a boy, her nephew, had been drowned along with some young companions with whom he had been engaged to go on a sailing excursion in the Firth of Forth. She sent for him in the morning, and prevailed on him to give up his engagement. His companions went, and were all drowned." The alarm with regard to the disappearance of Maria Martin was brought to its height by the mother dreaming, three successive nights, that her daughter had been murdered, and buried in the Red Barn. Upon this, search was made, the floor taken up, and the murdered body discovered. The story is fully related in "Chambers's Journal" for October, 1832. In a note to Dr. Binns's "Anatomy of Sleep," Lord Stanhope is credited with relating that a Lord of the Admiralty, who was on a visit to Mount Edgumbe, dreamed that, walking on the sea-shore, he picked up a book which appeared to be the log-book of a ship of war of which his brother was the captain. He opened it, and read an entry of the latitude, longitude, as well as the day and hour, to which was added, "Our captain died." The company endeavoured to comfort him by laying a wager that the dream would be falsified, and a memorandum was made in writing of what he had stated, which was afterwards confirmed in every particular. J. Noel Paton relates the extraordinary fulfilment of a dream of his mother's involving the death of a dearly beloved sister. The murder of Mr. Perceval, which was seen in a vision more than one hundred and fifty miles from the spot where it occurred, is a well-known story, and authentic. A lady friend of mine vouches for the truth of the following story:—"My mother resided in London, and one of her children was sent out to nurse. She dreamed soon after that she went to the nurse's house, and saw her own child, looking half-starved, and faintly struggling for a crust of bread which the nurse's child was eating. The children were both in one cradle. My mother went the very next day, and found the children exactly as she saw them, her own child weak, ill, and hungry." Of a member of my own family, it is related that he added, with some difficulty, two keys to a musical wind-instrument. He had prepared the drawings, and the new instrument was about to be manufactured, when he dreamed that a military band passed through the city where he resided, the leader of which used an instrument with the very additional keys that he had invented. The next day a regiment *en route* for London did pass through the town, and the leader was playing upon such an instrument, the first manufacture of a firm which had just brought out the new bugle.

Mr. John Hill Benton, in his work "Narratives from Criminal Trials in Scotland" (1852), urges that no ghost-story, or story of dream-coincidences, could stand the sifting examination of a court of justice. Dr. Symonds evidently entertains a similar opinion, though he

gives us what would seem some startling evidence leading to a contrary conviction. Before any such cases are received as true occurrences, he very properly asks that they shall undergo most rigorously all the tests of evidence. Regarding them as instances of a kind of revelation, he says:—"We look for a final cause; but we discern none, unless it be the possibility of some influence on the spiritual condition of the individuals." "Aye, there's the rub." A writer in "Blackwood" puts the question, but does not answer it: "Are appearances in dreams, imaginary visions; or are they, however inexplicable the mode, the actual spirit-presence of the person whose images they bear?" It is not my intention to discuss this point, which may be left to the philosophers, medical and scientific. My purpose is simply to compile for the reader a few notable instances of dreaming, curious as records of "dream-life," and suggestive for thoughtful inquiry.

Whether, by some extraordinary action of the spiritual essence, warnings of disaster or prophetic monition may be communicated to the brain through the mystic medium of a dream; or whether our fancies of the night are the mere mixed associations of time and place and memory wrought into apparent reasonable shape by accidental circumstances; these are questions that may hardly be fully answered. It cannot be doubted that God permitted this exercise of the faculties when in a semi-state of rest for our benefit in some way; and, whatever may be said to the contrary, the evidence in favour of the extraordinary fulfilment of dreams, altogether beyond human explanation, is too strong for disbelief. May it be that an All-wise, All-powerful Being still deigns to influence occurrences by this means, and more especially in the bringing of great criminals to earthly justice; for "murder, though it have no tongue will speak with most miraculous organ?" That dreams are to be catalogued and interpreted as the believers in *Oneirocriticon* set forth is simply nonsense; but they often serve important ends, and seeing how great a portion of our lives is occupied with sleep, to dream is to fill up a great blank with sensations of pleasure, hope, joy, that last often long after the dream is over, tending to an elevation of the aspirations and ambition of the dreamer. There are mathematicians who have solved great problems in dreams. Franklin frequently formed correct opinions of important matters in dreams; the mind has been inspired with beautiful poems in sleep, Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" for example, though this may, perhaps, hardly be spoken of in the sense of what are called ordinary healthy dreams, seeing that it may probably have been greatly influenced by opium. And now—

"To all, to each, a fair good-night,  
And pleasing dreams, and slumbers light."

JOSEPH HATTON.

### PATTY'S MISTAKE.

YOU would never have dreamed it, never in the world ; but my sister Patty was really one of the most impulsive persons I have ever met ! She was always plunging headlong into some scheme that seized upon her fancy, or into which some designing person, knowing her weakness, had inveigled her. Itinerant impostors with eyeless needles, pins as pointless as the jokes of a would-be wit, shoe-laces from which the tags departed upon the first trial—all these seemed to land at our door and victimize Patty.

You will perhaps smile as you read this ; so may I ; but true tears shine in my eyes as well. I glance at this sister of mine as she sits with the firelight glinting on her busy needle, darning with consummate patience the most trying orifices in the stockings of the writer. Who but she could make those gaping holes neat and presentable ? You would hardly imagine, from her face, what sort of a person she might be ; for the lines are very clear and quiet, the eyes tender, gray, the whole expression that of peace rather than repose—the peace that “ passeth all understanding.” But then the mouth ? If you would read character with any degree of accuracy, always observe the mouth. My sister's is as sensitive as that of a child—just as eager, just as credulous as full of faith. But never, never around any child's mouth is such an expression of pathos, of yearning. Ah ! never such a record of deep suffering patiently borne as stands written in lines of untold loveliness about the sweet mouth of this, my elder sister.

You will understand, then, why it was that the little urchins in the street asked her for “ pennies,” and put out their hands, frosty, red as winter apples with the cold, sure that the penny would be forthcoming. You will understand why it was that people who were sick or in trouble always sent for Patty.

She knew as well as any body that people imposed upon her ; but then, she liked them none the worse for it : the main idea that animated her life was that of “ helping other people along.” Let her help you in some way, and she was the obliged party, and felt grateful to you for the privilege. Perhaps there had been a time when her life had held other hopes beside these ; a beautiful season, when it was early Spring-time with her heart, when the birds sang, and the violets bloomed in sunlight. The birds had stopped their singing, maybe, and if the violets bloomed, one guessed it was above a grave ; but since she said nothing

of all this, neither shall I, except as I must tell the story of what befel us in our quiet home.

It was a very quiet home, in a little country town, where we had always lived. Our house was a rambling, old-fashioned affair, built by my father years ago. There had been plenty of birdlings in the nest, but they were all gone now, only Patty and myself left. So we lived in the old rookery still; poor as church mice we were, but we contrived to be happy after a fashion of our own. We made roaring fires in the old-fashioned grates, but what became of the heat it was hard to say; I suppose it all went up the chimney, just where it wasn't wanted. So Patty and I wrapped shawls around ourselves, and made light of the matter. The doors, too, wanted to be re-hung of a cold winter's day; how the draughts came in, biting one's feet! and if it snowed, what white flakes would drift in through the cracks, and lodge in the great, barn-like entries! Well, well; this was all very healthy, laughed we; plenty of fresh air, at all events.

This philosophy answered the purpose until one afternoon—I shan't say one *unlucky* afternoon, because that's a bad expression, and, besides, the sequel proved otherwise. One afternoon, then, I let Patty proceed alone to the one scene of dissipation in which we permitted ourselves to indulge—viz., that useful branch of festivity known as the "Dorcas Meeting." I saw her depart with misgivings; it was an uncommon thing for us to be separated at any time, especially on these occasions; but how could I help myself? Marian, our plump little maid-of-all-work—a misnomer in this instance, as Patty and myself did all the work worth speaking of—had been sent for—wanted at home. There were various odds and ends to be attended to, so, as I was the youngest, I got the reticule, put in thimble, scissors, &c.—I always attended to these small items—and despatched Patty to the field of action. If I had dreamed for a moment what the result would be!

Patty came home from the meeting a trifle earlier than usual, and with her bonnet edged a little bit to one side, as if it had been put on in a fit of desperation; just as a man, under similar circumstances, claps his hat close down over his eyes.

"Elizabeth, I've done it!" was her exclamation as she entered.

"Done what, Patty?"

"I expect you'll be amazed."

"Patty, you haven't gone and invited that Dorcas Society to meet here? I can't—I won't believe that!"

"Elizabeth, that's exactly what I have done; and now, all that's left to us, is to make the best of it."

I was simply confounded. For a space silence reigned; then I opened a solemn battery, as follows:—

"Patty, have you considered that we want a new stair-carpet, that we haven't chairs enough, or plates enough, or cups enough? Have

you considered that the back-room upstairs hasn't any carpet at all on it, good, bad, or indifferent?"

"I've been expecting all the time we should have been able to buy one," interpolated my victim.

"All very well, Patty; but the time hasn't come yet when we have had any money to spare, and I don't know when it will! Have you considered that we live in an old barn of a house, with fires that won't warm it, that we've got no rugs in the parlours, and nothing as it ought to be?"

"The parlour-carpets are very pretty, though, Elizabeth," said my poor sister, in a voice that quivered.

"But while you were about it, why did you pick out the coldest weather? and why did you select our house after that of Mrs. Rawlins, who is rich, who is splendid, who has every comfort and luxury?" ended I, jumbling everything together, as women will when they wish to be especially aggravating.

I say I "ended" thus. For the truth was, that as I regarded my sister, I beheld large round tears, betokening extreme distress, falling down her cheeks.

I made a rush then, threw my arms around her neck, and exclaimed, "Patty, stop crying, and I'll not say a word more. Just tell me how it came about."

"There was no other place for it—I mean the Society—to meet. And I—and I thought they all looked at me, and in a moment of desperation I said we'd have it, and they all took it up at once."

"Of course, curiosity," I muttered.

Then I grew desperate, too, and said defiantly—"Well, let them come!" as if the members of the said meeting, one and all, were a set of vampires, or ghouls, or dreadful savages of one sort or another.

Then, Patty and I sat down and talked the matter over as to the hows and wherefores, so that we might not be disgraced and put to open shame.

Should we set a regular tea-table, or should we pass the tea round? The latter carried the day. It was an innovation, to be sure, for the time-honoured custom was, at a given signal from the lady of the house, to proceed in solemn state down stairs to a table set forth with frigid splendour, in its "company" silver, china, &c., which we surrounded in silence—a feminine conclave, without one masculine present to stimulate conversation, or give zest to the meal; in my heart, I always sympathize with a man when he declares that he abhors "tea-parties."

This point settled, another difficulty dawned upon us. "Elizabeth, we have no silver."

I stared at Patty, then said, with some degree of bitterness—"You're to blame for that, you know; you would sell the silver—our mother's silver—to pay our father's debts."

"I know it. I had no choice. We are poor enough, but then we are honest. We owe no human creature a farthing—always remember that, Elizabeth."

"Patty, I never could find out who bought that silver."

A grave look came into my sister's eyes, a very gentle flush into her cheek; I knew what she was thinking of when she looked so; or, rather, I always had known heretofore, but I was puzzled now.

"I have sometimes thought," said she, with a quiver in her voice, "that perhaps somebody we knew had purchased it, and that some time or another I should have money enough to buy it back."

"Dear me, that's just like you!" sighed I.

Poor dear Patty! she was always having visions of this kind. She had keen æsthetic tastes, loved the beautiful so dearly. She was all the time illuminating our poverty with the thought of some golden period that should presently arrive, when all her pet ideas could be carried out, and our home made the earthly paradise she would have it become. What beautiful flowers she would have, what charming knickknacks, such as all women love. Oh, it was as good as a novel to listen to her dreamings! No child over a fairy-book ever pictured such delights as Patty. For to us all these things seemed wildly beautiful, because beyond our reach—we could hardly realize that to many people they were every-day matters, nothing heeded, nothing thought of, never worth a moment of thanksgiving to Him who had created this love for the beautiful in the soul made after His own image!

The next day was Sunday. I watched Patty in church, and could see that, notwithstanding the time and place, the Dorcas Meeting was the uppermost thought in her mind. I knew, by the wrinkles in her forehead, the exact calculations she was making, and as she glanced over at the Rawlins's pew, I knew she was devoutly hoping that the portly figure of Mrs. Rawlins would be absent from the next meeting. For we poor folk all dreaded the splendid Mrs. Rawlins, and wished to steer clear of her, as little minnows try to keep out of the way of the larger fish. Dear me! this magnificent lady might despatch poor little us at a mouthful—her splendour engulfed everything as in a maelstrom.

The next day we sat in our back-parlour, striving to be very cheerful; but I think we both felt as if our hearts were freighted with lead, instead of the lively currents that were wont to ebb back and forth.

Patty had just said, "Never mind, Elizabeth, it's always darkest just before day," when the door-bell chirped after a comical fashion it had of its own, and Marian let in the sweetest girl in all the town—Alice Starbright.

The face carried out the name. Surely no star ever gleamed more sweetly upon any wanderer, leading him towards rest and comfort, than did this of Allie's, always smiling, always tender, bright. Aye, even now, though she wore garments of deep mourning. She had lost her father

only a month ago, yet for all that the shadow of her grief was suffered to rest upon no other heart—the cross had been sent to her alone, and she bore it with a gentle bravery most beautiful to see.

Patty kissed the lovely girl-face first on one cheek, then on the other, then gave way to me with that light flush on her cheek, and that intent look in her eyes, that Allie's coming always brought to her countenance. Allie's father had once upon a time been my Sister Patty's lover; and with her to love once was to love always.

"So you're going to have the Dorcas Meeting here?" was Allie's first greeting.

"Yes," we answered, striving to look cheerful with all our might.

"I heard of it last week," continued Allie, laughing.

"Of course," grumbled I; "everything of that kind travels fast—bad news especially."

Allie laughed again. It wasn't like her to be unsympathetic, but she seemed delighted with that soft, sweet delight she always showed when she was going to make somebody happy.

"Let's see. It's to meet to-morrow afternoon. Cake all made?"

"Yes, indeed," said Patty, with that bright, tender glow on her face she always wore for Allie.

Then she must needs bring a plate of cakes for Allie to taste—crisp, home-made biscuits, such as only Patty could make; crumpets, delicate brown, melting in one's mouth; and frosted sponge-cake.

"These are all fit for a queen," said Allie, tasting, with gusto.

"Yes," cogitated Patty, "the cake will answer, if the rest only matched."

"I've got a favour to ask," said Allie, growing grave all at once. "You're not either of you used to Dorcas Meetings. Now I know just the *modus operandi*. Aunt Mary is ill, and wants to see you both ever so much. Now you go there in the morning, and don't get back here until the afternoon, just about dusk, say; the people do not come before then, and if I don't have everything in beautiful order my name's not Alice Starbright!"

At first we declared this to be impossible; but Allie coaxed, and then Patty gave in. I followed suit, for I began to see there was something beneath it all. When she had attained her object, Allie ran away, but I noticed before she went that she nestled close up to Patty and kissed her many, many times.

The next morning found us on our way to Aunt Mary's. Patty, who was never more at home than when she was going to a sick-room, carried a little brown basket on her arm. How many pilgrimages that little brown basket made in the course of the year! and what comfort it always held for invalids!

The day slipped away, Patty as busy as a bee, setting things to rights, and making Aunt Mary comfortable in every direction, until the sha-

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"I've got a favour to ask," said Allie, growing grave all at once. "You're not either of you used to Dorcas Meetings. Now I know just the *modus operandi*. Aunt Mary is ill, and wants to see you both ever so much. Now you go there in the morning, and don't get back here until the afternoon, just about dusk, say; the people do not come before then, and if I don't have everything in beautiful order my name's not Alice Starbright!"

At first we declared this to be impossible; but Allie coaxed, and then Patty gave in. I followed suit, for I began to see there was something beneath it all. When she had attained her object, Allie ran away, but I noticed before she went that she nestled close up to Patty and kissed her many, many times.

The next morning found us on our way to Aunt Mary's. Patty, who was never more at home than when she was going to a sick-room, carried a little brown basket on her arm. How many pilgrimages that little brown basket made in the course of the year! and what comfort it always held for invalids!

The day slipped away, Patty as busy as a bee, setting things to rights, and making Aunt Mary comfortable in every direction, until the sha-

dows began to fall and grow deeper. Then we trudged home again, in a queer mood both of us.

What a sweet face it was that met us at the door—that led us in—and to such a transformation! Wonder of wonders! what did it all mean? In the old-fashioned grates, leaping, dancing fires cracked and sparkled, and before them glowed crimson rugs of softest velvet. In the windows swung moss baskets of trailing creepers and bright-hued blossoms. On the oaken sideboard gleamed, most wonderful of all, our mother's silver!

Patty knew it at once. She ran to it, she kissed each separate piece and gave it a little hug of delight. Then I knew how much it had cost her to part with it, how proud and pure the honour that would let no stain be left upon our father's memory.

Allie drew us to the fire, and, one hand in each of ours, said:—

"Dear friends, you will not refuse me the comfort of pleasing you? How dear you both are, I cannot tell; how dear one of you must ever be to me, I can only show in deeds. Before my father died, he told me the story. How dear Patty had been to him; how she was to have been my mother. I think he loved her through all these years. He told me, too, that he had bought the silver, but dared not offer it in his lifetime; he knew Patty too well for that; when he was dead and gone, she would take it from his daughter and keep it for the father's sake."

By this time Allie and I were both crying. Patty shed no tears, but smiled softly, sweetly, brightly, as the angels may, then held out her arms to Allie Starbright. Allie nestled in them. She had lost her mother years ago, and now that her father had gone, there was no room for empty gossip—Patty could be her mother in very deed and truth.

Perhaps you may ask why Patty and Joseph Starbright, Allie's father, had never got married. I cannot tell you; it seems to me that hearts that are dearest in this world are for ever held apart. God help us all! how we drift away from those we prize the fondest. Hush! there is no loss even here. Remember, we are only children, the best of us, and what we would soil or mar, God puts out of reach for the present. Trustful hearts, we shall have it all back again by-and-by.

The meeting came and enjoyed itself wonderfully, and stayed later than it had ever stayed at anybody's before. The fires warmed the sitting-rooms, the young people played their old-fashioned games with the best grace imaginable, and the dreaded Mrs. Rawlins stayed at home.

So, after all the worriment, the cogitations, the tears, the end of Patty's Mistake was unmitigated delight. From henceforward I never mean to worry any more. It's wicked, and a waste of time besides. For there's a best to every worst, and where the shadows fall the thickest, it's a sure sign that there the light is brightest!

## OUR LOG-BOOK.

"SHAKESPERE'S pre-eminent genius," said a German friend once to the writer, "seems to consist in the absolute freedom he allows to each character in self-development. There is no pause, no hurry, none of that abruptness or bluntness of dialogue which marks artistic impatience and imperfect sympathy; he is impartial to all and sundry, great and small; gives free scope and vantage to every one; each intelligence, however wayward or wicked, gradually forming itself in beautiful consistence with the 'rounded whole' of law and providence in which, all unconsciously, it is most intimately and necessarily involved." As a salient instance of this, the German referred to Lady Macbeth. That character—one of the subtlest and least simple of all Shakespere's creations—had been to some extent misunderstood, he said, simply owing to the tendency of the common mind to read men through arbitrary impressions and dislikes, founded on undue prominence given to separate traits and actions. He maintained that there was a great deal to be said for Lady Macbeth; and he was certain that Shakespere, through her and her helpless pitiful remorse (which the drama on the very surface signified as the cause of her death), meant to give testimony to all time that the worst woman might have some good in her. And had the great dramatist foreseen what English fiction was to come to in our day, one could almost believe that he meant her to be a perpetual protest against the tendency of the two great schools of English fiction—the sensationalists and the cynical moralists or followers of Thackeray. So said the German; but on being met with Mr. Carlyle's rather extravagant statement, that the worst man must also have some good in him at bottom else life were not endurable, and that he must have some ground of justifying himself to himself were it only as an escape from suicide, our German shook his head, and went off into a very philosophical analysis of Macbeth's character and villainy, which, however, our readers may well be spared.

Our purpose in referring to Shakespere here is this, that we may not speak quite wide of the mark when we say, that in nothing does lack of creative sympathy show itself more than in hurry, and broken, irruptive movement of dialogue. We could name one lady-novelist whose works bear evidence of great analytical power and of uncommon constructive talent, who yet, almost out of self-will and a certain unsocial habit, expresses a kind of egotistic impatience, and even contempt for common people and their little foibles, whenever she essays dialogue, from which noticeably she always escapes when she can. Thackeray, in one respect, certainly did Englishmen a poor ser-

vice, when he tried to establish a sameness of human character and motive by attention to foibles and littlenesses alone; for necessarily he inspired scepticism as to that mysterious ground of sympathy and emotion from which all separate traits take their colour and significance, as interpretative of character. The work of teaching men the human heart without regard to any ground of lofty possibility—that is, without any reference whatever to an ideal—has by one very thoughtful writer been designated stronghandedly as devil's work; and though we are very far from applying any such words to Thackeray's productions, yet faithful criticism may be justified in declaring, that Thackeray's greatest defect is, that by his abnegation of an ideal, he is compelled through all his characters only to report himself. In one word, he is concerned only with that in a character which can be *observed* as badness; and passes over that which can only be felt and imaginatively realized as goodness. Thackeray's elaborate patience is thus very much the patience of the scientific man, and not the impartiality of the artist. The words he puts into Becky Sharp's mouth, as we have already said in these pages, really embody Thackeray's opinions, and, as such, may have a certain value and a certain truth; but people—especially wicked people—are not so ready to confess against themselves as some clever novelists would have us to believe. Our German friend held that Shakespeare knew better; and perhaps it would not be a bad thing for us to test, by a careful re-reading, the truth of his theory about Macbeth.

We have been led into this vein by a recent novel of great merit, "Steven Lawrence, Yeoman." It abounds in fine glimpses of character,—somewhat broken and contorted, however, like reflections in a concave mirror—and it has that lightness, and free, airy delicacy at which most women aim, but which few attain without sacrificing, to a great extent, that naturalness and reality which form the flesh and blood of a work of art. Mrs. Edwards has almost succeeded in writing a first-rate novel; but her defect is fatal: it lies at the very centre of her conception. Dora Fane is quite an impossible character. She seems to us a compound of two separate beings—the easy, innocent, merely indulgent, catlike, conscienceless creature, in whom true intelligence has never been awakened, and the knowing, self-conscious self-seeker, careless of all, save the attainment of the end on which the heart has been set. Very much of her conduct is inexplicable, save on this supposition. Indeed, when one bears in mind the manner in which, at the very outset, she is made to betray all her selfish, catlike proclivities, and to proclaim her incapacity for anything noble, we might almost say for anything honest, one cannot help feeling that she has been put before us for a purpose. We very soon discover that poor little Dora, on whom, of all the characters, the greatest pains have been spent, is there, after all, as a mere foil to the superior nature and charms of Katherine Fane, and the natural health, openness, and supreme honesty of Steven Lawrence. It was a great pity that

the authoress did not find out some other way of developing the characters of her hero and heroine; for, notwithstanding great labour and some real art, what is meant to be the most original and ambitious character in the book, is a kind of troublesome dissolvent. Wherever the other characters are brought into the closest associations with her, they are almost sure to lose their own identity. Katherine constantly does so; and this is even the case with Lawrence, whenever, in company with Dora, he is thrown into an interesting situation, as on Dora's return from Lady Sarah's masquerade in the dress of a page, when he says that he will not touch her; and again, when he meets her in the lane, the day after his refusal by Katherine, when a cunning word and a turn of her eye draws from him a thoughtless offer of marriage. Now, though it seems to us consistent enough with Steven's character that he should behave himself to Katherine Fane as he does, very much of his behaviour to Dora is quite unnatural and inconsistent, more especially after he had had experience either of her stupidity or her deceit—for either of which such a man as he is pictured would have equally disliked her—in the matter of the portrait. And all the faults we have hinted at come out in the dialogue whenever Dora is introduced. It is unrelieved confession. "The better art o' hidin'" is most arbitrarily conferred on poor Dora whenever it suits the needful turn in the story; while she is often represented in the very next page as being as simple and guileless as a child. Where Mrs. Edwards has really succeeded is in some of the minor characters. Not seldom there is a freshness, a clearness and felicity of touch, such as we have rarely seen surpassed. Barbara, the old housekeeper at Ashcot, with her brusque ways and her invariable breakdown and touching comfort when things come to the worst, is a fine study; and so is poor, thin Lord Petres, though quite in a different way. Mrs. Hilliard, too, is good; and the squire is much the same man from first to last; only, now and again there is a softness of outline and colour which contrasts very much with the subject. But the worst of the matter, in viewing it broadly, is, that when Mrs. Edwards least intends it, sympathy is excited for Dora in those very movements of her nature which are most opposed to all sense of propriety, and even of morality itself. On the whole, however, this is a piece of excellent work; its great drawback is, that the padding is often run up too close to the central situations and characters. Perhaps this is the reason why, for ourselves, we cannot say that Mrs. Edwards' upwards of 900 pages have affected us as she reports a certain 900 pages to have affected one of her characters.

"Doctor Brady" is a story of a totally different order from "Steven Lawrence;" indeed, turning from the one to the other is very much like passing from home-quiet into the rattling variety of a strange city. The one is a series of studied pictures which, with all their defects, are full of expression and truthfulness; the other is a panorama, in which pictures dashed together pass before you with only a sort of arbitrary

connection; or at all events, the connection they bear to each is not easily traced, owing to the manner in which they are presented. Mrs. Edwards never uses a scene save with reference to character; Dr. Russell uses his characters solely with reference to their capability of being thrown into positions which will give him opportunities for indulging his faculty of description. The eye, if it looks closely and steadily on such work for any length of time, gets confused with the ever-recurring brilliancy of colour; neutral tint, or *tonalitie*, being foreign to the style. We must take Dr. Russell for what he is, of course, and not quarrel with him because he is not somebody else; but still we may be allowed to say that "Doctor Brady" sufficiently proves that novel-writing is not his *forte*. There is powerful writing in it, and it abounds in bits of powerful description, but it shows no skill of construction whatever; it is deficient in plot, what there is of that being either absurd or inconsistent; while as to character, even the fact of the Bradys being Irish, will not lead any one of the least knowledge or insight to maintain that they are natural. Dr. Russell, too, is diffuse even when he aims at being faithful, and falls upon the oddest expedients to pad out the incident, sending his hero careering over the world on the slimmest pretexts, such as crossing the Atlantic in pursuit of a smuggler. The idea of involving the hero's mother in obscurity, and sending him out to India in search of her, to find her at last the Ranee of Auripore, is very handy in the circumstances, and must elicit praise for ingenuity whatever may be said of it as creation. The smack of adventure, the rollicking humour, rather thin for the most part, and the wealth of description, which characterize the book, make it very readable, however.

Mr. Sutherland Edwards, in the "Governor's Daughter," had to contend with many of the difficulties and temptations which beset Dr. Russell. He has, on the whole, cleverly overcome the one and escaped the other. With much special knowledge of Russian and Polish life and habit, he has yet succeeded in giving us an interesting story, and in imparting to it all the reality and force of history. Any one wishing to know something of the kind of men who figure in Polish revolutions will find it here; and mad-cap Poles, if they are humble, will meet with hints which may help them to escape risks hereafter. Mr. Edwards has shown not a little skill in running a silver thread of domestic romance through all the events which have a historical bearing; and here and there we have pictures that are sweet and tender, and skilfully relieved by much dry humour. General Gontchalin and Boutkovich, we should not be surprised to know, are studies from life; and Mr. Edwards has shown not a little artistic skill in associating them with a world of his own, in which they take on new colours and give out new lessons. We point out one blunder, which it is possible may have been noticed before: that a very important letter, which the Governor's daughter is made to throw in the fire, turns up again all right afterwards, when needed.

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